NEW
NICK CARTER
WEEKLY

Issued Weekly. By subscription $2.50 per year. Entered as Second-class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, *79-89 Seventh Ave., N. Y.*

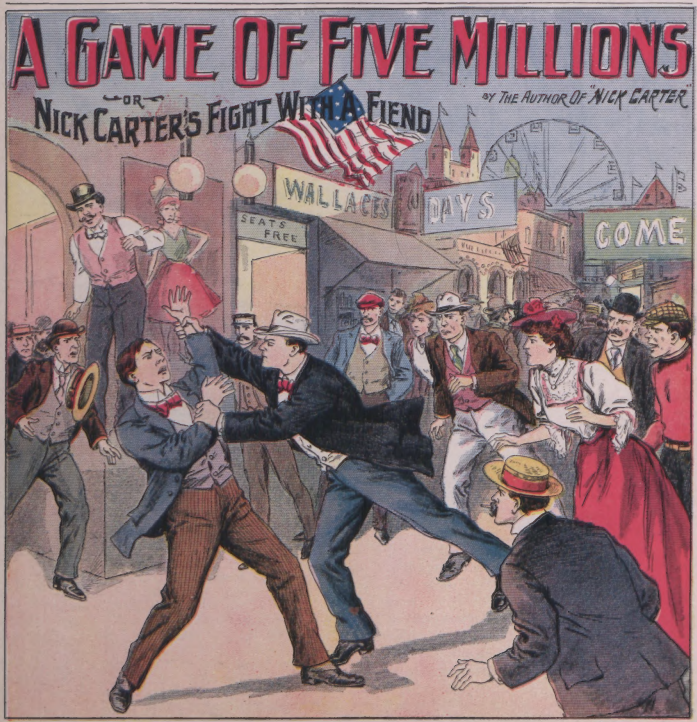
No. 513 NEW YORK, OCTOBER 27, 1906. **Price, Five Cents**

A GAME OF FIVE MILLIONS

OR

NICK CARTER'S FIGHT WITH A FIEND

BY THE AUTHOR OF "NICK CARTER"



Nick barely escaped receiving a severe blow squarely in the face. But he managed to parry it, and at the same time he caught Graeme and held him as if he was in a vice.

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A Game of Five Millions;

OR,

NICK CARTER'S FIGHT WITH A FIEND.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

AN UNACCOUNTABLE DISAPPEARANCE.

When Nick Carter opened his morning's mail it was the very last letter in the lot which interested him most, and after reading it through to the end twice, he tossed it across the table to his chief assistant, Chick, with the request that he should read it aloud. All three of his assistants, Chick, Patsy, and Ten-Ichi, were seated at the table with him and at once they gave their undivided attention to the reading of the letter.

It was as follows:

"BEECHWOOD HALL, WASHINGTON HEIGHTS,
"May 31, 1906.

"MR. NICHOLAS CARTER, New York City.

"DEAR SIR: I am in great distress, and because I have frequently heard my brother mention your name with every degree of respect and admiration, I have decided to appeal to you. Were it possible for me to go to you, I would not ask you to come to me here, but I am only just recovering from a severe illness and am as yet unable to leave my room; therefore, I ask if you will be so good as to call upon me at my home to-morrow evening, June 1, at half-past seven o'clock.

"Briefly, my brother has mysteriously disappeared. He left me, one week ago this evening, to go to the Grand Central Station, there to take a train for Syracuse—this is the end of his junior year at Hamilton College. From the moment he left his home and me, there has been no trace of him whatever. He has disappeared.

"Will you come to me, Mr. Carter, and help one who is now utterly helpless herself? I shall expect you unless I hear from you to the contrary.

"NANCY GRAEME."

"It is a very simple, straightforward letter, and very much to the point," said Chick, as he passed the missive back to his chief. "You will go, of course?"

"Certainly."

"It is for this evening, at half-past seven. Shall you want me, or any of us?"

"No; not for this evening. Chick, have you or have any of you, in fact, seen anything about this affair in the papers?"

"Not a word."

"Then it follows that for some reason the family have not thought it best to send out a general alarm."

"Yes," replied Chick meditatively. "I suppose that is due to pride."

At exactly half-past seven o'clock that same evening, Nick Carter's automobile drew up at the door of Beechwood Hall, an imposing edifice located on the highest land in that section of the northern end of Manhattan Island which is now commonly called Inwood, but which, a generation ago, was included in the "Washington Heights" section of the city.

As the detective stepped from the car, a man servant came down the steps to receive him, inquiring respectfully if he were Mr. Nicholas Carter.

Satisfied as to that, he led the way into the house and presently conducted Nick up a broad and winding flight of stairs to the second story, where presently, after tapping gently against a door and being bidden to enter, he opened it and announced:

"Mr. Carter."

The detective stepped inside the room; the door was closed behind him, and he found himself in the presence of a young woman whose remarkable beauty, now heightened into etherealness by the pallor resulting from her illness, almost made him catch his breath.

She was half-reclining upon a couch among a medley of pillows, and, therefore, amid a riot of colors; and as he entered the room and approached her, she smiled up at him and extended one waxlike hand.

"You will pardon me if I do not rise to receive you, Mr. Carter?" she said, with a smile which seemed to light up the entire room. "I am still much too weak to stand upon my feet, although I am improving rapidly and getting better every day. Will you help yourself to a chair? and will you draw it near to my couch? Thank you."

"You have been severely ill, Miss Graeme?" asked the detective.

"Oh, yes," she replied. "Nobody expected that I would recover. However, I am going to get well—quite well;" and she smiled brightly at him again.

"It was your illness which called your brother to you from his college, I suppose," said the detective, going directly to the purpose of his call.

"Yes." A shadow crossed her face and a deep sigh escaped her. For an instant there was a suspicion of tears in her great gray eyes, but she forced them back again bravely and smiled upon the detective again.

"When I thought I could not live, I sent for Collin," she continued. "He came at once. He was with me a week; and then he went away again, to return to college for his commencement exercises."

"And that was one week ago yesterday?"

"Yes."

"You say in your letter that there has been no trace of him since he left this house."

"Yes; that is quite true, Mr. Carter."

"What effort have you made to find a trace of him?"

"None whatever, until I sent that letter to you."

"How is that, Miss Graeme?"

"I had no idea that he had disappeared."

"Tell me, in as few words as possible, just how you arrived at the conclusion that he *had* disappeared?"

"When Collin left me, he promised to write immediately upon his return to the college. I did not hear from him, but I thought little about it, supposing that he had decided to await his regular day for writing—Sunday."

"He has been in the habit of writing to you on Sunday?"

"Always. All our lives, whenever we have happened to be separated, we have never permitted a Sunday to pass without writing to each other. I have never done so until I was too ill to write; he has never done so until last Sunday."

"Well, Miss Graeme?"

"When I did not hear from him at the proper time, after Sunday, I telegraphed to him at the college. There came no reply, and after waiting a suitable time, I telegraphed again to the president of the college."

"He replied to you, of course."

"He replied that my brother had not been seen nor heard from since he left there to come to me."

"What did you do then?"

"I wrote the letter to you, sir."

"You did not communicate with the college again?"

"Yes. I wired to the president asking him if he would inform me by telegraph the moment he had any information concerning my brother."

"But you are really not sure that he has disappeared after all, are you?"

"I am, sir. That is, I am sure that something has happened to him. If you knew my brother, you would understand. Even if I were perfectly well, he would never have left me all this time without a word from him if he were able to send me a message. He certainly would not do so when I am ill."

"How old is your brother, Miss Graeme?"

"He was twenty last December. We are twins."

"Indeed. I should have said that you were not more than eighteen. Can you give me some idea of his personal appearance? Have you a good photograph of him?"

"There is one on the table, Mr. Carter. It has been said that we resemble each other as closely as persons of opposite sexes can do so."

Nick crossed the room to the table, secured the photograph, and returned.

"The resemblance is very striking," he said, studying

the picture. "I should say that when you are in robust health, it would be even more so."

"Yes," she replied. "When we were children we often masqueraded as one another. I do not doubt that we could do so still. We are exactly the same height, and, save for the fact that he is a man and I am a woman, we are precisely alike in many things—I was about to say in all things."

"Are you quite strong enough to reply to some very personal questions concerning him?"

"I am strong enough for anything which will tend to end this terrible suspense, sir."

"Will you tell me quite frankly what you know of your brother's habits?"

"I know them to have been and to be above reproach, Mr. Carter."

"Do you *know* that, or do you merely believe it to be true, Miss Graeme?"

"I *know* it, Mr. Carter. He is a boy, of course—and he is not perfect; but there has always been entire confidence between us. Collin has never deceived me. If he did anything that was reprehensible, he always told me about it. We have always been all in all to each other. I can assure you that no habit of his can be responsible for his disappearance."

"Had he a sweetheart?"

"Yes. My dearest friend. She has been traveling in Europe, but is due to arrive here the day after to-morrow."

"So your brother has not seen her recently."

"Not for two years."

"Will you tell me her name?"

"Margaret McLeod. Her home is the adjoining estate to this one. It is called Elm Park."

"This place—Beechwood Hall—has always been your home?"

"My fathers and grandfathers have lived here during four generations, Mr. Carter."

"Are your parents living, Miss Graeme?"

A shadow crossed the exquisitely beautiful face of the young woman when the detective asked the question, and there was just the slightest instant of hesitation before she replied. Then she said:

"My mother is living. My father died when Collin and I were children—we were three years old. I have a stepfather, Mr. Carter."

"Ah! Where is your stepfather now? And your mother?"

"They are in Europe—or, rather, they are on their way there. They went by the Mediterranean route to Genoa. I suppose they have arrived by this time."

"Pardon me; but do you mean that your mother left you to go to Europe while you were so severely ill?"

"No. I was taken ill the evening of the day they sailed. I was perfectly well when they left me."

"Your illness was very sudden, then?"

"Yes. Quite so. But, really, Mr. Carter, I wish you would leave me out of the question. It is of my brother—of Collin—that I wish to talk! not of myself."

"Certainly," replied the detective. "But you must not forget that often one question has direct connection with another—especially when the subject of those questions happen to be twins. I will ask you some more questions now about your brother."

"Thank you. I only hope that it will be in my power to reply to them."

CHAPTER II.

NICK CARTER SUSPECTS A PLOT.

"It was one week ago yesterday that your brother left you to go to Syracuse, was it not?"

"Yes."

"At what time of the day was it?"

"At four o'clock in the afternoon. He intended to take the six-o'clock train, and he wished to stop for a moment at his club, on the way to the station."

"What is the name of his club?"

"The Corrington."

"Have you communicated with the club to know if he did stop there?"

"I directed Morgan—he is our footman—to telephone to the club. Collin had not been seen there; or if he had been there the clerk did not know about it."

"What method of conveyance did he employ in going from here to the station? How did he leave the house?"

"Some one came here after him in an automobile."

"Do you know who it was?"

"No."

"How is that?"

"I only know that Collin had talked with one of his friends over the telephone during the morning, and that that friend had agreed to come after him and take him to the train."

"But you do not know who that friend was?"

"No. I do not."

"And have no idea?"

"Not the slightest, I am afraid."

"Who do you know among the friends of your brother, who is the owner of an automobile?"

"Really, Mr. Carter, I think that almost all his friends own cars."

"You are, however, sure, are you not, that the person who came after him to take him to the station was some person to whom he had talked that day?"

"Oh, yes; I am positive of that much."

"Do you think you could tell me approximately the time he talked with that friend?"

"I think so. I think it was between ten and eleven in the morning. I remember that when he came into this

room about that time, I asked him how he was going to get to the station, and he replied that he had just been talking with a friend who was coming after him with a motor-car."

"He did not mention the name?"

"No."

"Where is your telephone?"

"In the small reception-room off from the front hall, down-stairs."

"Will you excuse me while I make use of it for a moment?"

"Certainly."

The detective hurried away and descended the stairs to the reception-room in question.

He called up central and gave the number of the telephone he was using; then he said:

"It is very important that I should have a transcript of all the telephone calls that were asked for over this wire one week ago yesterday—that would be the twenty-fourth."

"You will have to apply to the main office for that, sir," was the reply. "Our tally-sheets have been turned in, of course, and we keep no copies of them."

"But cannot you attend to that for me and thus save me a considerable amount of time?" asked Nick. "There cannot have been more than two or three calls from here on that day. In fact, I doubt if there was actually more than one. It is very important."

"I will do what I can, sir."

"Thank you. This is Nick Carter who is making the request. I think your officials will be willing to oblige me."

"I will call you up, Mr. Carter, as soon as I find out what you wish to know," came the assurance from the opposite end of the wire; and Nick, having directed Morgan to listen for the call, returned to the room above.

"Miss Graeme," he said, as he resumed his seat, "did your brother have a large amount of money with him when he left you?"

"I do not think so. Possibly several hundred dollars."

"That is considerable. Was he in the habit of carrying so much around with him?"

"Really I don't know. It was his habit always to have plenty of money with him."

"And that habit was generally known?"

"I suppose so. I don't know."

"Pardon me if I ask a directly personal question which your surroundings answer even before I ask it. Your brother has inherited a large property, I suppose?"

"He will inherit it when he is twenty-one—next December."

"And you——"

"The same."

"And now—just at present—what is the source of your revenue?"

"We each have an allowance from the estate. Shall I tell you how much it is?"

"If you please."

"He has fifteen thousand a year, and I have ten."

"From the estate left by your father?"

"Yes."

"Pardon me again—I am not seeking to pry into your personal affairs, but if I am to search for your brother and find him, I must know all there is to know about him. Does your mother also enjoy an allowance, or was a portion of the estate left directly to her by the terms of your father's will?"

Again there was that half-instant of hesitation. Then she replied:

"My mother received five hundred thousand dollars in lieu of dowry; the use of the homestead during her life, and twenty-five thousand dollars a year to continue as long as she should remain a widow."

"So the annuity of twenty-five thousand ceased when she remarried?"

"Yes."

"How long a time have you had a stepfather, Miss Graeme?"

"Really, Mr. Carter, I cannot understand how these matters are associated with the disappearance of my brother."

"Possibly they are not. I am seeking merely to obtain all the information I can concerning the conditions by which your brother was surrounded. How long is it since your mother married her present husband?"

"Almost two years."

"And what is her name now?"

"Her name is still Graeme. My stepfather is also my uncle. He is my father's brother."

"Ah!"

"Many years younger than my father. He is also several years younger than my mother."

"You and your brother did not approve of this match, did you?"

"Frankly, sir, we did not."

"And has the disapproval caused an estrangement in the home circle? Please do not take offense, and please answer me, Miss Graeme."

"There is no estrangement so far as our mother is concerned—that is, there is none outwardly; but we are Scotch, and we are resentful. Collin and I do not like our stepfather, and we—we ignore him. But he is rarely here. He and mother are traveling all the time. They are never here for more than a few days at a time; a week or two at the most."

"So, since your brother has been in college, you have had the home practically to yourself, I understand?"

"Yes."

It was at that moment that the footman tapped upon the door to tell the detective that there was a call for him at the telephone, and he went at once to reply to it.

As he had suspected, there had been but one call used over the phone that particular day, and it had been readily found. It proved to be the telephone number of the Corrington Club—the same club at which Collin Graeme had intended to stop for a moment, while on his way to the station.

The detective thanked the operator, and then returned again to Nancy Graeme's room.

"I see that you are very tired," he said, as he resumed his seat for a moment, "and I am going to take my departure at once. To-morrow I will come to see you again—only it will be during the afternoon instead of the evening."

She looked up at him wistfully.

"Can you give me any encouragement, Mr. Carter?" she asked. "I have tried to be brave while you were with me, but—but——"

"Listen to me, Miss Graeme," said Nick gently, taking her hand between both his own, and stroking it gently. "If you were well and strong you would see this matter as I do—that is, that there is no real cause for worry at all. Something has happened, of course, but I do not believe it is anything serious. Collin has made some change in his plans after he left here, and he doubtless wrote to you about it and the letter has gone astray; or the person with whom he left it, to be mailed, has neglected to post it."

"Oh, I hope so!" she sighed.

"You must not forget that he left you in the middle of the afternoon—at four o'clock. It was broad daylight at that time. I have discovered that it was to his club that he telephoned that morning, and I shall go from here there. I have no doubt that I will find out all about him in a few hours. In the meantime, you must promise me that you will throw the burden of all this trouble upon me, and compose yourself to rest, to-night."

"I will try."

"You must more than try. You must *do* it. You are a plucky little woman, and you must not permit this to put you back in your recovery."

"Oh, I won't. I won't."

"That's the way to talk."

"You couldn't come before four to-morrow, could you?"

"No; not very well."

"Or telephone to me?"

"I think it will be better for you to expect me at four. And now, I must go. Good night."

At the door of the room he paused an instant, and then, quite casually, he asked:

"By the way, Miss Craeme, who is your physician? I hope he is a good one."

"Oh, there is none better. He is Doctor Codman."

The detective passed on down the stairs then, but, as he was leaving the house, he said to the footman:

"Morgan, what is the address of Doctor Codman?"

"Stoneyhedge Court, sir. 150th Street."

Nick turned on his power and dashed away—and thirty minutes later he drew up in front of Stoneyhedge Court, where, a moment later, he was ringing the doctor's bell.

It was a tall, spare, sharp-featured, gimlet-eyed, swarthy gentleman who received him in the person of Doctor Codman. A man whom the detective instantly disliked and distrusted; and with one of those swift decisions which he often acted upon, Nick decided that he would not carry out the original intention of his call.

He had intended to ask the doctor some questions about the illness of Miss Nancy Graeme, but he suddenly decided that he would not let it appear that he knew Miss Graeme at all; and so, calling up a good imitation of hoarseness, he pretended that he had somehow contracted a severe cold, and asked for a prescription for it.

Having secured his prescription and paid his fee, he took his departure, but once outside the house and in his motor-car again, he remarked confidentially to himself:

"If that chap isn't a scoundrel, I never saw one; and if there isn't some underhand work going on here somewhere, I miss my guess.

"Nancy Graeme was taken violently ill the evening of the day her mother and stepfather sailed away for Europe, and then, while she was still hanging between life and death, her twin brother was mysteriously spirited away. There's a nigger in the wood-pile here, somewhere, sure."

CHAPTER III.

EVIDENCES OF A CONSPIRACY.

The Corrington Club happened to be one with which the detective was entirely unfamiliar. He could not remember that there was a single member of that organization with whom he had an acquaintance, and, therefore, when he entered the club-house, he made his way at once to the clerk's desk.

"I am in search of information concerning one of your members," he said to the clerk. "I refer to Mr. Collin Graeme."

"Mr. Graeme? Oh, he is away at college."

"Yes. I know," replied the detective. "But he was at home about a week ago, and it was one week ago yesterday that he left his home to come here. He was on his way to the Grand Central Station at the time."

"Yes?" said the clerk, with mild interest.

"He should have arrived here about five o'clock in the afternoon of that day. Were you on duty at that time?"

"I certainly was."

"And you do not remember to have seen him?"

"No, sir."

"I happen to know," pursued Nick, "that at 10:45 o'clock that same morning, he called this club over the telephone, and was in communication with one of the members here. It was that member who later in the day—about four in the afternoon—called for him at his home with a motor-car. Could you suggest who that friend might have been?"

"Really, sir, I could not. The personnel of this club is almost entirely composed of students. A large percentage of them own automobiles, and——"

"Could you tell me if there happens to be any person in the club at the present moment with whom Mr. Graeme is especially intimate?"

The clerk stepped outside his little office and examined the doorman's list. Then he motioned to one of the servants and directed him to find "Mr. Parsons" and to say to him that a gentleman wished to see him in the reception-room.

Five minutes later Nick rose from his chair to greet the young man who had been summoned.

"Mr. Parsons?" he said.

"Yes."

"A friend of Collin Graeme's?"

"Yes."

"I wish to know if you saw Mr. Graeme on the occasion of his last visit at home. He left the city—or is supposed to have gone away—one week ago yesterday."

"May I ask who you are, sir? And why you are questioning me about Mr. Graeme?" Parsons inquired politely.

"Certainly," replied the detective. "I have come here at the instance of his sister, who has been very ill and who is still in a delicate state of health. She has heard nothing of her brother since the moment he left her to go to the Grand Central Station in company with a friend who called for him in a motor-car, and——"

"That friend was myself, sir."

"Indeed. Then I am fortunate to find you, Mr. Parsons."

"Isn't Graeme at his college?"

"No. He never arrived there. Will you tell me all that you know about him, Mr. Parsons?"

"Gladly. But first, will you tell me your name, sir?"

"I am Nick Carter."

"By Jove! Are you? I'm glad to know you, sir. Collin and I have often talked about you."

"That is pleasant to know. Now tell me what you did with Graeme, when you went after him to take him to the train."

"I called for him at his home at four o'clock."

"Yes; I know that. You were to stop here at the club. Did you do that?"

"No. We went first to Stoneyhedge Court."

"To see Doctor Codman?"

"Yes."

"Were you long there?"

"Possibly fifteen minutes. I did not go inside."

"Did Graeme see the doctor? Was he at his office?"

"Yes."

"Where did you go from there, and where did you leave Graeme?"

"We went directly to the Hotel Astor, and that is where I left Collin. He had some sort of an appointment there. He did not tell me what it was, but he said that he would go from there to the station by the subway, and that I was not to wait for him. However——"

"Well?"

"I was about to say that I took his grip—a dress-suit case—to the station for him and left it in the parcel-room to be called for."

"What did you do with the check which you received for the grip?"

"I put it in an envelope which I addressed to Collin. It was understood that he was to ask for the envelope; and, besides, one of the clerks there knows him by sight."

"Which one?"

"A lad named Hughes."

"Then, when you left Graeme at the Hotel Astor, that was the last you saw of him?"

"Yes."

"You have no idea what his engagement at the Astor was?"

"No."

The detective looked at his watch.

"It is rather late," he said, "but the parcel-room at the station is not yet closed. My motor is at the door. Will you ride over to the Grand Central with me?"

"With pleasure, Mr. Carter."

The detective was as greatly attracted by the personality of Isaac Parsons as he had been repelled by Doctor Codman, and he felt that this young man would gladly do everything in his power to aid in the search for Graeme.

They were only a few moments in getting to the Grand Central Station, and Nick made his way directly to the parcel-room.

"One week ago yesterday," he said to the clerk who came forward to attend to him, "this gentleman checked a dress-suit case here, and afterward placed the check in an envelope which he addressed to Collin Graeme. He left it here to be called for, for the six-o'clock train."

"Yes," replied the clerk. "I remember it. It was I who waited upon him."

"I see that you have something else to add to that statement," said the detective.

"Yes. The envelope has never been called for. The suit-case is still here, sir."

"In that case," said Nick, "you will do me a favor if you will return the suit-case to this gentleman who left it here. I am Nick Carter."

"Certainly, Mr. Carter."

Five minutes later they were again in the automobile.

"What the devil does it all mean, Mr. Carter?" asked Parsons, as soon as they were seated.

"That is more than I can say at the present moment," replied the detective evasively.

"Where are we going now?"

"To my home—if you don't mind being kept out of bed for another hour or so."

"Not at all. All night if you wish."

The detective conducted Parsons to his study, and as soon as they were comfortably seated he said to him abruptly:

"Mr. Parsons, I suppose you are an intimate friend of Graeme's, are you not?"

"I think I am closer to him than any friend he has; yes."

"I am going to be quite frank with you, Parsons."

"Thank you, Mr. Carter."

"This morning I received a letter from Graeme's sister asking me to call there. The letter stated that her brother had disappeared. I went there. I found that she had been very ill, and supposing herself to be dying, she had sent for her brother."

"Yes; he told me that."

"Graeme and his sister are twins."

"Yes."

"Next December, when they become twenty-one, they each inherit a considerable fortune."

"Yes. Something like two and a half millions each."

"If both should happen to die before that time, the entire fortune would go to their mother."

"I suppose it would. I had not thought of that."

"Miss Graeme was taken violently ill the evening of the day her mother and stepfather sailed for Genoa. Believing that she was going to die, Miss Nancy sent for her brother—and now the brother has mysteriously disappeared. Is there any significance about the chronology of these events which impresses you, Parsons?"

"Great Heaven! You don't mean——"

"I ask if you receive any impression from these strange circumstances?"

But Parsons did not reply. He remained with his eyes fixed upon the detective, and all the shuddering horror he felt at the suggestion that had been made to him was expressed in them.

"Tell me what you know of the mother," said Nick abruptly.

"She is a very beautiful woman. She looks barely ten years older than her daughter."

"What else?"

"I have always thought her a lovely woman; incapable of——"

"Never mind that. Is she a vain woman?"

"I should say—yes."

"Are the son and daughter fond of her?"

"They were devoted to her until this marriage. They objected to that. I think there has been an estrangement since then."

"Has Collin ever said anything to you about it?"

"Never a word. He is a reserved chap; but I know that he was greatly upset by the marriage of his mother. It happened two years ago. Collin and his sister were only eighteen, then. I suppose you know that the step father is also their uncle?"

"Yes."

"I think—I do not know—that Collin's father and this uncle who is now the stepfather were never friendly. I do know that Collin had no idea that he had such an uncle until he suddenly appeared on the scene about a year before the mother married him."

"What is his name?"

"Angus; Angus Graeme. I don't think he is much past thirty years old."

"Have you ever seen him?"

"Yes."

"Give me your impressions of him."

"I am prejudiced, Mr. Carter."

"Never mind that. Tell me what you think about him."

"I wouldn't trust him as far as I could throw a bull by the tail, if you want to know."

"Do you know what his business was before he married the widow?"

"He was a physician."

"Eh? What? A doctor? Humph! I wonder if he and Codman were acquainted before this marriage took place?"

"I can answer that question; they were. They were not only acquainted, they were partners. Codman himself told me as much."

"Partners, eh?" said Nick musingly. "Parsons, there is a deeper plot here than I at first supposed."

"What do you mean, Mr. Carter?"

"I mean that, in my opinion, Mr. Angus Graeme is playing for a stake of five millions; and that his old friend and partner, Codman, is assisting in the game. I mean that if Collin Graeme is still alive, we have got to hustle for all we're worth to save him from being murdered—and I fear that even now we are too late."

CHAPTER IV.

A PLOT WITHIN A PLOT.

The following morning at the breakfast-table, Nick said to his chief assistant:

"Chick, the very last trace I succeeded in obtaining of that young man who has disappeared—Collin Grame by name—is at the Hotel Astor, where he went to keep some sort of an engagement with a person unknown to us. He had previously stopped for a few moments at the office of Doctor Codman, at Stoneyhedge Court, and I think it not unlikely that it was Doctor Codman whom he was to meet at the Astor.

"Here is a photograph of young Graeme which his sister gave me. I want you to take both the boys, Patsy and Ten-Ichi, with you, go to the Hotel Astor, and do your best to get on the track of young Graeme. If you find any trace of him, follow it up, only keep me posted."

"That, I suppose, is all the information you have to give me?"

"It is all the information I have at all. One of his intimate friends took him to the Astor in an automobile and left him there. No trace of him has been discovered since that moment."

"Have you yourself made any inquiries at the hotel?"

"No; not one. The field is perfectly clear to you. Do your best, Chick. Take the boys with you so you can follow up as many clues as you happen to find."

When the detective was alone he remained for some time in deep thought; but then, rising suddenly, he ordered his automobile around, and thirty minutes later he stopped it in front of the residence of one of the most celebrated of New York's great doctors. For the purposes of this story we will refer to him as Doctor Stag.

Entering, the detective found that the office was filled with patients in waiting to see the doctor, and so he settled himself comfortably in one corner of the room to await his own turn.

It came at last—after an hour of waiting—and he passed inside the private office of the great physician.

"Hello, Carter!" exclaimed the doctor. "Why didn't you send in word that you were here? I could have had you in ahead of some of the others."

"Oh, I thought I'd wait my turn, doctor. I'd have had to do it, anyhow, for I want you very badly, and I know that I couldn't drag you out of here until your hours were over."

"What's the matter with you, Nick? I never knew you to require the services of a doctor, save for now and then a wound of some kind."

"It isn't myself, doctor; it's another."

"Well? Out with it. But, first, how many more were out there when you came in?"

"Three."

"Then step into that back room until I take care of them. I will be at your service after that, for I see plainly that you have something important on your mind."

"I have."

"Then wait a few moments more."

It was thirty minutes later when the doctor called the detective again into the office.

"Now, Nick," he said, "what is it?"

"Doctor," replied the detective, "I am going to ask you to do something for me that is entirely against your principles."

"The devil you are! What is it?"

"I want you to go with me to see a patient who is now under the care of another physician."

"Can't do it, Nick. Not even for you. It's against every rule of ethics——"

"Oh, I know all that. But this is an exceptional case."

"All the same, Nick——"

"Wait. Do you know Doctor Codman, who has an office in Stoneyhedge Court?"

"I know that there is such a man; that is all."

"You don't know anything about him, for, or against his character, do you?"

"No; if I did, I wouldn't tell you."

"Oh, yes, you would. Do you happen to know of a family named Graeme, who live on an estate at Inwood, called Beechwood Hall?"

"Yes. I was Donald Graeme's physician. He died about—let me think—seventeen years ago, I think it was. There were two children and a very beautiful young mother, I remember. I do not think I have seen or heard of any of them since that time, Nick."

"It is one of those children—the daughter—whom I want you to see."

"Can't do it, Nick, under the circumstances. If she will discharge their present doctor—Codman, did you say?—I will attend her with pleasure. I remember the father very well."

"Look here, doc, this is a desperate case. I did not intend to tell you all that I suspect, but I see that I will have to do so."

"Well?"

"I believe that Miss Nancy Graeme has been—and probably is being now, poisoned, with the connivance of Doctor Codman; or, rather, to put it plainly, *by* Doctor Codman himself."

"Good God, Nick!"

"I mean what I say, doctor."

"Then why don't you swear out a warrant and arrest him. What the devil are you mooning around——"

"Softly, doctor, softly. You know me, and you know something about my methods. I haven't the slightest evidence that what I have said is true. The young lady herself would be the very last one to believe it. I want you for once to put that code of ethics of yours in your inside pocket and go there with me."

The doctor shook her head.

"Listen," said the detective. "I will introduce you under an assumed name. I will represent, if you like, that you are another detective—and, indeed, that is what you will be for the time being. But go there you must. I want you to see that girl."

"Tell me more about the case, Nick. Possibly I can see my way clear, then."

And the detective told him the entire story as he knew it, from beginning to end.

"You see, doctor," he said in conclusion, "it is a game of five millions. This stepfather means to possess himself of them if he can. He was once a partner with Codman—and, probably, if Codman succeeds in carrying out the instructions that have been given him, there will be one of the millions coming to him. That is the whole thing in a nutshell."

"I'll go, Nick. I'll be ready in five minutes; but get me back here as soon as you can."

"I did not intend to ask you to go there until four this afternoon."

"Now, or never, Nick. I can't go at that time, anyhow; I can, now."

"All right. My car is at the door. Do you wish to pass under an assumed name?"

"You may do as *you* please about that, Nick. When I decide to do a thing, I do it. That is all."

It was an hour later when the automobile turned into the beech-bordered driveway which led to the front entrance to the mansion; but Nick, with a forethought which afterward proved to be fortunate, guided his car around to the rear of the house before he brought it to a stop.

There he left the car, and with the doctor walked back again to the front of the house, where they found Morgan standing on the steps waiting for them. He recognized Nick instantly and bowed profoundly.

"I don't think that Miss Graeme is expecting you, sir," he said. "She told me that you were to come at four. It is now about the hour for Doctor Codman to call."

"Oh, is it?" replied Nick. "Well, Morgan, if Doctor Codman should happen to arrive while we are here, be good enough not to mention the fact that we are here, and also give us sufficient warning so that we will not have to encounter him. Will you do all that?"

"Yes, sir."

"And if we should leave before he arrives, you need not let him know that we have been here at all."

"Very well, sir."

"And now will you announce us, and say that I have a friend with me. Say to your mistress that it is important that she should meet my friend."

"Very good, sir."

He returned after a moment and requested them to follow him, and, accompanied by the great Doctor Stag, Nick entered the room where Nancy Graeme was ill.

The detective saw at once that she was not so well as when he left her the preceding evening. She had not found the strength to leave her bed for the couch this morning; but she smiled upon the detective with an effort at her usual brightness, and reached forth her wax-like hand feebly to greet him.

But it was the doctor who took it, quite to her surprise; and Nick hastened to say:

"Miss Nancy, this call is a part of a conspiracy which you must enter into with us. It requires three to form a conspiracy, you know."

"I don't understand," she replied.

"This gentleman is Doctor Stag. You have heard of him? Of course. He was your father's friend and also his physician. He has consented to come here, very much against his will, but at my earnest solicitation. The conspiracy is that you must not tell Doctor Codman that you have seen him. Will you promise me that?"

"But why?"

"Because I wish to be sure that you are getting the best care that can be obtained. You will promise me, won't you?"

"Is it fair to Doctor Codman?"

"We are not considering Doctor Codman; we are thinking only of you. Will you conspire with us, for your own sake?"

"Yes; yes. But what of my brother, Mr. Carter?"

"I think that we will know something about him before the day is past, Miss Nancy; and I don't believe that anything serious is the matter. But that reminds me. Have you ever said anything to Doctor Codman about his disappearance?"

"No; I have not had an opportunity. I have not seen him since day before yesterday morning. Yesterday I had no medicine all day. The nurse spilled it. The nurse is my own maid; I would have no other. But last night, after you had gone, a messenger came from the doctor with some medicine for me. I don't think I am as well this morning, with the medicine, as I was yesterday without it."

The doctor was about to ask a question, but Nick stopped him.

"I wish to say one more thing," he said, "and then I will leave you two alone together. It is this: For the present, Miss Nancy, I very much prefer that you would say nothing to Doctor Codman about your brother, or me. Now I will leave you with Doctor Stag. I wish to speak to Morgan."

The detective left the room and descended the stairs.

"Morgan," he said to the footman, "how long have you been with this family?"

"Thirty-three years, sir. I was twenty years old when

I took service with Miss Nannie's father. He was a [illegible] then. His father was just dead."

"You love Miss Nannie and Mr. Collin, do you not?"

"Bless you, sir, they are like my own bairn, both of them. I and mine [illegible] when we saw what that Miss Nannie would be; but praise be to God she is getting well now."

"She was taken ill very suddenly, was she not?"

"Like a bolt out of the heavens, sir. I —— Whist, sir! There comes the doctor. There is a library at the rear of the house on the second floor where you can wait till he has gone, if you and your friend do not wish to see him."

The detective turned and bounded up the stairs. He entered the room without knocking, and, crossing quickly to the bedside, he said:

"Doctor Codman is here. Doctor Stag and I will wait in the library till he has gone. In the meantime, Miss Nancy, you are not to mention the fact that we are here, or that we have been here. Will you remember?"

"Yes," she replied; "but I do not——"

"I will explain all a little later. But the question now is—Will you do that?"

"Yes," she replied, and she hurried from the room.

CHAPTER V.

A VICTIM OF SLOW POISON.

"Well, Nancy," asked the detective, as soon as they were seated together in the library.

"I was right, Nick," was the hurried reply.

"Poison?"

"Yes."

"What kind of poison? How was it administered?"

"I can't answer that—yet. I don't know."

"[illegible] one of the [illegible] poisons, I suppose?"

"Yes. One of the preparations of foxglove, I should say, from the symptoms I have discovered."

"Did you examine the medicine that was sent to her the night [illegible] to have made her worse again?"

"No; I did not have the time. All my time was taken up in attending to her until you came to warn me that Codman was here. But I will have a look at it after he has gone."

"She is certainly not as well to-day as she was last evening."

"I haven't a doubt of that."

"I wonder if it is [illegible] to look at the record of this [illegible] would do?"

"I should say that it would be an excellent idea. While I [illegible] I would put a look at the chart."

"Good, so you do. Wait here until I [illegible] to be."

The detective left the room silently and passed rapidly through the hall toward the front of the house.

The door opening into Nancy's room was not tightly closed, and Nick paused there for an instant.

He could hear the subdued tones of the doctor [illegible] as he talked to his patient, and, after listening a moment to satisfy himself that there was no likelihood that Codman would come out of the room at once, he turned and motioned to Doctor Stag, who was observing him from the door of the library; and then, a moment later, the two passed silently past the door of Nancy's room and entered that of a room [illegible] opposite it, from the windows of which they could command a view of the driveway in front of the house.

Nick took the precaution to close and lock the door when they entered the room; and then they went to the window and seated themselves where they could obtain a good view of Codman when he should leave the house to enter his Stanhope motor, which awaited him at the door.

Nor had they long to wait, as it proved.

Codman was obviously in a hurry, that morning, for they had barely taken their places at the window when they heard him say good-by to his patient, across the hall, and in a moment more he appeared outside the house, beside his Stanhope, where he stood with his sinister face turned directly toward them while he pulled on his gauntlet gloves before entering the carriage.

The instant he turned and faced them, Stag seized the detective's arm in a [illegible] grip, at the same time whispering in his ear:

"I knew him. You were right about him, too. I am glad that I came."

"What do you know about him?" asked the detective.

"I will tell you [illegible] when our business here is finished. But we must lose no time. We must see at once what he has been [illegible] for his patient in the short time he has been here."

They hastened back across the hall then, into Nancy's room; but only to find that she had lapsed into unconsciousness since the departure of Codman, and it was evident, too, that she had just swallowed a dose that he had left for her.

For an instant the detective stood beside the bed, appalled by what he saw, but the doctor fell at once to work upon his patient.

"She lived in time, Nick," he [illegible] "Now help me upon her feet and hold her there. So; that is right."

He quickly produced a small pocket case, which he always carried with him, and [illegible] what he wanted from [illegible] he [illegible] a phial, applied [illegible] his fingers and [illegible] upon her tongue.

He waited a moment after that, and then repeated the dose, watching her narrowly the while.

This time there was almost an immediate perceptible effect.

Nancy's eyelids quivered; she caught her breath several times, after the manner of one who has been half-strangled with water, and then slowly she opened her eyes.

Perceiving this, the doctor directed Nick to place her back again upon the bed, and then they sat beside her, watching her, while consciousness gradually returned.

"What is the matter?" she gasped. "What has happened? Where is Doctor Codman?"

"He has gone," replied Nick quietly; and the doctor motioned him to say no more.

But after a little he spoke to her himself, very quietly, very calmly.

"Miss Nancy," he said, "I knew you when you were a very little girl—not more than three years old, if you were that. I was your father's friend. I want you to trust me; to trust me implicitly. Will you do it?"

"Yes," she replied.

"Are you strong enough to tell me all that Doctor Codman said to you while he was here?"

"Yes."

"What was it? Begin at the beginning; at the moment when he entered the room, and tell me everything."

"He first asked me how I was feeling, and I told him not so well as yesterday. He asked if I had taken my medicine regularly, and I told him about not having any to take yesterday, and that I thought I had felt much stronger and better without it."

"What did he say to that?"

"He laughed. Then he asked if I had taken the medicine he sent to me last night, and I replied that I had."

"And then?"

"Then he gave me a pellet to dissolve on my tongue; but the moment I had taken it I began to feel very strangely. I felt as if I were floating in the air; as if I could not touch with my hands or feet anything that was substantial. A sort of haze gathered over my eyes, but I was, nevertheless, conscious."

"What did he do? Tell me, Nancy?"

"He bent over me. He lifted my eyelids with his fingers. He took one of my hands in his and seemed to count my pulse-beats, and I heard him say that one more such dose would do the work. I don't know what he meant by that, do you?"

"Perhaps. What else?"

"Must I tell you?"

"Yes."

"He leaned over me and pressed his lips against my forehead, and I heard him whisper something about everybody's thinking that I was dead, but that he would fool them all. I remember distinctly that he said: 'Nancy, you and I will fool them all, won't we?' I could not answer, and that is the last I remember until I opened my eyes to find that you had returned."

The doctor turned away; but he said:

"Sit down here, Nick, beside her, and talk to her. It will not harm her to talk, and to listen to you. Indeed, it will do her good. I wish to spend a few minutes in examining the medicines that Codman has left."

The detective drew his chair close beside the bed, and, taking one of Nancy's hands in his own, he held it while he talked to her in a low tone.

"Tell me about this nurse you have," he said. "Your maid, you said she was."

"Yes."

"Has she been with you long?"

"No; only a month."

"Do you like her? And do you trust her?"

"I suppose so. I have not thought about it."

"Where is she now?"

"I let her go out for the morning. She is to return at noon. I did not think that I needed her."

The detective glanced at his watch; it was not yet eleven o'clock.

"Where was she when I was here last night?" he asked.

"I had sent her to the city on an errand. I did not wish her to be here when you came."

"Why?"

"I don't know. It was my feeling."

"I suppose she knows about your anxiety about your brother?"

"Yes."

"I think, Miss Nancy, that I will venture to take a great liberty with your affairs."

"A great liberty? What is it?"

"I am going to tell Morgan to pay the maid a month's wages in advance and discharge her. May I do that?"

"But why, sir?"

"I think it is necessary, and I think the doctor will agree with me. We wish to see you get well at once, and it is quite necessary that you should be directly under the care of some person whom we can trust implicitly. I will supply such a person. I will telephone for her before I leave the house. I do not want your present nurse to enter this room again."

"Mr. Carter is quite right, Miss Nannie," said the doctor, who had approached the bedside and who, therefore, overheard the last remark of Nick's.

"You frighten me!" she murmured breathlessly.

For a full minute the doctor stood quite still, studying her, and then, as if he spoke half to himself, he said:

"I think you are strong enough. I think you are brave enough. I will risk it."

"Risk what, doctor? What do you mean?"

"I have decided, Miss Nancy, that it will be best to take you entirely into our confidence. I think you are

strong enough and brave enough to hear the truth. You are a brave girl. We need your help, even as you need ours, and you must try to help us."

"I will try; but you mystify me."

"Nancy," said the doctor kindly, bending over her and resting one hand lightly upon her forehead, "you have not been made ill by natural causes; you have been rendered so by the use of subtle poisons, dexterously administered."

"*Doctor!*"

"It is only too true, Nancy."

"By Doctor Codman?"

"Yes; by Doctor Codman."

"But why? Why?"

"Who can tell just why, now, my child? That is something which Mr. Carter will have to discover for you. But the fact remains the same."

He looked around for the detective, but discovered that Nick had left the room, evidently to telephone for a nurse, and he continued:

"Tell me, child, has Doctor Codman ever made love to you?"

"Yes," she replied, in a whisper.

"Have you encouraged him—ever?"

"No; oh, no. I have not. I could not think of him in such a way. Besides——"

"Besides what, Nancy?"

"He is a friend of my stepfather. I do not entirely trust him. I do not think I like him, although I have thought he was a splendid doctor."

"He is a heartless fiend, Nancy; a fiend——"

He stopped suddenly, for happening to half-turn his head he discovered that a woman, evidently the maid who was acting as nurse, had entered the room and was standing close beside him. He knew at once, from her expression, that she had overheard his remarks about Doctor Codman.

CHAPTER VI.

A SISTER TO A FIEND.

Before the doctor could utter a word—in fact, before there was time to do so—the door of the room opened softly, and Nick Carter stepped inside.

Without seeming to be concerned in the least with the maid, and, placing the small of the arm with no gentle grasp, he said to her:

"I want a word with you outside if you please."

And then, in spite of the resistance she offered—and she did attempt to resist him—he drew her quickly toward the door and through it, closing it after them.

He did not pause there, for he well knew that the ears of their confederate were close by, and he knew that in the next room Doctor Codman was with the real nurse. If the maid [illegible] and Doctor Stag had first concealed themselves, at the time of the arrival of Codman at the house.

Nick drew her after him inside the room, closing and locking the door after him. And then he withdrew the key and dropped it into one of his pockets.

He turned his back to her as he did so, and the act came near to costing him his life; for instantly the woman drew a short dagger from her bosom, and, turning upon him with the quickness of a cat, she attempted to plunge it into his back.

But something warned him of his danger.

He heard the swishing of her garment, and wheeled just in time to catch her arm as the weapon was descending upon him.

In an instant he had twisted the dagger from her grasp, and had seated her, none too gently, among the pillows of the couch between the windows of the room.

"So," he said. "That is your game, is it? I am not surprised. I am glad you did that, for now I have ample excuse for detaining you."

"You *dare* not detain me!" she cried out, attempting to rise from the couch and confront him; but he forced her back again.

"If you make another effort to leave that seat," he said coldly, "I will fasten you there with a pair of handcuffs. What is your name?"

"Find out!" she retorted sneeringly.

"Oh, I can find out all right enough," replied Nick. "I have no doubt that there is a record of it at police headquarters. I wouldn't be surprised if your picture is there, too. What is your name? What is the name by which you are known here?"

"Jane Gore," she replied sullenly.

"At whose instigation did you secure the position of maid to Miss Graeme?"

"At my own. Whose else's?"

"You have been here a month. Was it decided a month ago that Miss Graeme was to be put to death by slow poison, and that her brother was to be abducted and murdered?" asked the detective coolly.

The woman shrank visibly under the detective's searching eyes; but she recovered herself almost instantly and attempted to laugh.

The effort was a dismal failure, however, and she started to her feet again in desperation.

But Nick was ready for her this time. He realized that in order to get any information from this woman he would have to adopt harsh measures, and so now he seized her, whirled her around so that her back was toward him, and quickly snapping handcuffs upon her wrists behind her back, he forced her into one of the chairs and, with a second pair of irons, fastened her there.

"Perhaps you will remain seated now until I tell you to rise," he said grimly.

It was plainly to be seen that she was frightened now. She breathed out, in a half-whisper:

"You are a detective!"

"Yes," replied Nick. "I am a detective. I am Nick Carter. Ever hear of me?"

He watched her narrowly, and he saw her shrink down into her chair almost as if she had received a blow; and then, without any warning, she suddenly began to sob.

"Who induced you to come to this house to act as maid to Miss Graeme?" demanded Nick again; and this time she replied.

"Doctor Codman," she said.

"Did he tell you what you were to do while you were here?"

"Not at that time."

"When did he tell you?"

"The morning of the day that Mr. and Mrs. Graeme sailed for Europe."

"What did he say to you then?"

"He told me that it was more than likely that Miss Graeme would require the services of a doctor before she would be twenty-four hours older, and that I was to be sure that he was summoned."

"Well? And since then?"

"Nothing since then."

"You are lying, Jane Gore."

"I am not. I have only given the medicines as I was directed to do by the doctor."

"Did you not know, all the time that Miss Graeme was being poisoned?"

"I suspected it."

"Didn't you *know* it?"

"No."

"How long have you known Doctor Codman?"

"All my life. He is my brother."

"Your brother! You are a fit pair. Where is Collin Graeme?"

"I don't know. I don't know anything about him at all."

"You are not telling me the truth."

The woman shrugged her shoulders and did not reply.

"Come," said the detective slowly, "I have enough evidence already to send you to State's prison for twenty years or more, if not for life. If you make a clean breast of this whole affair; if you will tell me this entire plot from start to finish, sparing nobody, I will make it extremely light for you—possibly I can see that you get off altogether. Will you do it?"

"I have told anything to tell."

"Stop and think a moment. Answer all my questions truthfully, and I will promise to let you go free; that is, I will set you at liberty after a few days."

A startled glance came into her eyes, which did not escape the notice of the detective; but he proceeded as if he had not seen it.

"Who is the instigator of this plot against Collin Graeme and his sister?" asked Nick.

"I don't know that there is any plot against them."

"Doctor Codman is slowly poisoning Nancy Graeme. You know that."

"I have told you that I suspected it. I do not know it."

"Who is behind him in that dastardly work?"

"I don't know."

"Angus Graeme was once your brother's partner, was he not?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"In Aberdeen, Scotland."

"How long ago?"

"Five years."

"How much money were you to receive for your part in this work, Jane?"

The question was asked suddenly and quite unexpectedly, and it caught her off her guard. Her temper got the best of her, and before she could control herself she had replied:

"That's none of your business."

"Good. That is all I care to know on that point. Now tell me what has been done with Collin Graeme."

"I don't know anything about Collin Graeme, I tell you."

"You know that he went to the Hotel Astor, a week ago, to meet your brother, do you not?"

She started, but she remained sullenly silent.

"You know that he never got farther toward his journey's end than that hotel, do you not, Jane?"

Sullen silence was the only reply.

"I see," said Nick calmly, "that I will have to make an example of you, Jane."

"What do you mean by that?" she demanded suddenly, evidently startled.

"You will find that out soon enough. I am going to leave you here alone for a few moments to think matters over by yourself. When I return, possibly you will have made up your mind to talk. If you have decided to do so, well and good; if you have not, you go with me from her directly to police headquarters, and there I will introduce you to what is known as the third degree. You will be glad enough to tell all you know when once you are up against that proposition."

She became perceptibly paler under his veiled threat, but she made no reply, and Nick, remembering that her hands were fastened behind her back and that an extra pair of handcuffs pinioned her to the chair in which she was seated, unlocked the door, and, without a backward glance, passed outside.

Then he closed and locked the door after him, leaving the key in the lock, and he made his way to the room where he had left Doctor Stag with Nancy Graeme.

The doctor was seated in the chair beside the bed, and Nick noticed that Nancy looked perceptibly brighter.

"Good!" he said. "Our patient is improving."

"Decidedly," replied the doctor. "I have taken her into my confidence. I have told her everything."

"Everything?" asked Nick, in surprise.

"Yes. She knows all now. She believes that her stepfather is behind the whole plot, but we are both convinced that her mother knows nothing about it."

"Of course not." Nick turned to the young woman on the bed.

"Miss Nancy," he said, "I do not approve of this course. I do not think you should have been told about all this, but since you do know it, you must aid us."

"I will do everything in my power. Tell me what I am to do."

The detective was silent for a moment. Then he said:

"I have sent for a nurse, whom I know well, to come here at once by the fastest automobile that can be obtained. With her there will be a detective from the central office, who will remain here on guard so long as his services are necessary. Doctor Stag will call upon you as frequently as he deems necessary, and you will aid us by using all your efforts to get well again as rapidly as possible. Do you think you can do that?"

"Oh, yes, I can do that. I am very weak, but the doctor——"

"Tell me how she is, doctor," interrupted the detective.

"She is much better than could be expected. I do not now know the poison that has been used, but I have Codman's mixtures here, and I will soon find out what they are. Nancy has had one sinking spell since you went out, but I brought her out of it. She knows just what to do if another one should come on. And now, Nick, I *must* be going. Think of all the patients who are awaiting me."

"Very well. I hear an automobile at the door. I think our nurse has arrived. I will bring her to the room and introduce her to you, Miss Nancy, and the doctor will tell her exactly what to do for you. Come, doctor."

In the hallway outside the room Nick turned his eyes toward the library door, behind which Jane Gore was supposed to be a prisoner; but as he looked he started violently.

The door which he had left securely locked on the outside stood wide ajar, and when he ran toward it and peered inside the room, his worst fears were realized.

The room was empty.

Jane Gore had disappeared. She had slipped her handcuffs and made good her escape.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DEVILISH WORK OF A FIEND.

"I had a slicker proposition on hand than I supposed," said the detective, as he gazed into the small room from which Jane Gore had made her escape.

"She has gone, all right," said the doctor.

"Yes. Shall I tell you how she did it? She is evidently one of the few people who possess hands that are almost boneless. I mean by that that it is possible for her to make her hands so small that she could easily slip them through any handcuffs that would fit upon her wrists. I have known men—and big men, too—who could do that very thing. It is a muscular contraction of the hand which renders it of the same circumference as the wrist."

"But, even so," said the doctor. "How did she get out of the room?"

The detective removed the key from the lock of the door, and, after studying it a moment, handed it to the doctor.

"Look at the plunger of that key," he said. "Do you see some very small and faint marks upon it?"

"Yes."

"Those are made by an instrument which is known as key-forceps. With one of those small tools in your hand it is as easy to turn a key from one side of the door as the other. As easy as if one had hold of the shank of the key itself."

"She must have made her escape the moment you left her alone, Nick."

"Without doubt. But it isn't her escape that I mind so much."

"What, then?"

"The fact that she will warn her brother——"

"Her brother?"

"Doctor Codman is her brother. The fact that she will warn him of all that has taken place here. She has doubtless done it already—by telephone."

They descended the stairs, and there the detective asked the footman about the woman.

"Why," he replied, "it was some time ago that she came down stairs. She said that she was hurrying to the drug store for the doctor;" and that was all there was to discover.

"I think, doctor, that there is no time to lose," said Nick. "It is up to me to get to the office of Doctor Codman just as quickly as it can be done, and so, if you please, we will lose no time in installing the new nurse and in telling the officer from headquarters just what he is to do."

The detective conducted the nurse to Nancy's room and left her with the doctor and his patient; then he called the officer aside and said to him:

"If Miss Graeme should ask for Morgan, her footman, you are to admit him to her presence; but as no-

account whatever is any other person save the nurse, the doctor, or myself to be admitted. I, or the doctor, or both of us, will return her some time this afternoon or evening. Neither of us will send you any written message, so if one should be brought here, purporting to come from either of us, detain the person who brings it. You understand?"

"Yes."

"Then, there is the telephone. I do not think that I will have occasion to telephone to you, but, if I should, you are to ask: 'Who is it?' and I will reply by spelling out the word 'K-i-s-m-e-t.' I think that is all. We are up against a hard proposition—a very slick article, and we must be all the time thoroughly on our guard."

"I understand."

Five minutes after that Nick and the physician were in the motor-car, dashing cityward with all speed; but as they approached 150th Street the detective turned to the doctor.

"Stag," he said, "can you spare five minutes more?"

"Hardly. Why?"

"I want to stop at Codman's office."

"Go ahead, then."

When they drew up before Stag-shaker Court, Nick leaped to the pavement and hurried inside; but about the time the doctor had the summons had answered by a burly negro.

"The doctor is making his calls," he said, in reply to Nick's question. "He won't be back till four o'clock, sir."

Nick hesitated a moment. It was his impulse to go inside the office and look around, to discover if the doctor had made any hurried preparations for leaving; but he decided not to do so, and so he turned away and returned to the automobile.

"As I suspected," he said to the doctor, "the bird has flown. I will take you to your office now, doctor."

"It is about time I was there. I'll tell you that."

"What time do you think you should see Nancy again?"

"It isn't what time I should see her, it is what time I can see her. I cannot possibly make it to get there before late this evening, Nick."

"Tell me what time and I will come after you and take you there."

"Very good. Call for me at eight o'clock."

It was two o'clock when the detective arrived at his own home, and he found Chick there, awaiting him.

"What news, Chick?" asked Nick.

"Mighty little, I am afraid. I found the trail, but I lost it again at once."

"Tell me about it."

"It was after the man left the cigar-and-news stand that I lost him. He remembered perfectly having seen the hotel by the gentleman's overcoat, a week ago yesterday. He remembers the day, because his father was talking with him across the counter on that day."

"Well?"

"It seems that one of the regular patrons of the hotel bar and cigar-stand is Doctor Codman, so he also knows him, and he remembers that Codman and young Graeme met directly in front of the counter, had a cigar together, and then walked away in the direction of the bar."

"What more?"

"Nothing more. I cannot find another person around the hotel who remembers having seen either of them."

"Then the probability is that they left the hotel at once—and together."

"I think so."

"Where are Patsy and Ten-Ichi?"

"Patsy is at the hotel now, watching and waiting, in the hope that something may turn up. I couldn't think of anything better to do with him."

"No. And Ten-Ichi?"

"I sent Ten-Ichi to the doctor's house, to keep an eye out there, and with instructions to follow him wherever he went."

"You did? What time was that?"

"Two hours ago, at least."

"Good! Perhaps he was in time."

"In time for what, Nick?"

"We have had to show our hand. Codman has been warned by his sister, who was playing nurse for Miss Graeme—and he has skipped. I only hope that Ten-Ichi got there in time to follow him. By the way, Chick, there is one thing that we neglected."

"What is that?"

"The hospitals. I have no idea that Collin Graeme is in any of them, but it would be as well to make inquiry."

"I have already done that," replied Chick. "While I was waiting here for you I have telephoned to every hospital in the city. There is nobody in any of them who answers to the description of Collin Graeme."

The detective was silent for a moment. Then, rising to his feet, he said:

"Chick, I think I will go in person and hang around the Hotel Astor for the remainder of the afternoon. I will have my dinner there, too."

"All right."

"I want you to remain here at home. This evening you will take the automobile, and at eight o'clock call for Doctor Stag. When you have got him, go to the Astor after me. I will be awaiting you on the steps at ten minutes past eight."

"Very good."

When the detective strolled into the hotel half an hour later he had made just a slight alteration in his appearance; just enough change so that if he should happen to encounter the wily doctor the latter would not recognize

him as the patient who had called upon him for a prescription for a cold.

He found Patsy presently, but the lad had no information to give him, and so the detective strolled over to the cigar counter, and, having made himself known, reminded the clerk of the conversation he had already had with Chick that day.

"I have been wondering," the detective said, "if you could not recall a scrap or two of the conversation you heard between Doctor Codman and Collin Graeme."

"I do remember one thing that was said," replied the man, whose name was Porter.

"What was it?"

"I remember that young Graeme said to the doctor: 'You know I must catch that six-o'clock train?' and the doctor replied, just as they were turning away: 'Oh, you can make that easy enough. I came down in my Stanhope, and——' And that is all I heard."

The detective went outside the hotel and called the carriage officer to him.

"Tom," he said, "have you got a good memory?"

"I reckon so, sir."

"There is a gentleman who comes here frequently in a Stanhope. He is a doctor. He goes inside for a drink, remains only a short time usually, and comes out again. Now——"

"Do you mean Doctor Codman, sir?"

"Yes."

"I ain't seen him for a week, sir. I reckon he's out of town. The last time he was here he and a young man went away together, and I reckon they was goin' to see some other doctor, for I heard the young man say that if they did not find the doctor in his office, he really must not wait, because he had to catch a train."

As the detective turned away, he murmured to himself:

"I begin to see how the plot was worked. Codman has insisted upon seeing Collin before he went back to his college. The doctor has pretended that he wanted the boy to go with him to consult another physician about his sister's case. In that way he has succeeded in luring him to some place where he could easily be overpowered and captured—if not killed. It is very plain that I must abandon the direct effort to find Collin just now, and must bend all my energies to the capture of Doctor Codman."

He passed the remainder of the afternoon at the hotel, hoping that the attractions which the resort possessed for Codman would draw him there; but he did not come; and at ten minutes past eight he stood on the front steps of the building when Chick and Doctor Stag arrived.

"Come, Patsy," said the detective. "You may as well go with us. There is no use in your remaining here any longer."

As the Pontiac car glided northward, Nick gradually increased the speed as much as he dared to do, for he suddenly felt the oppression of anxiety. A premonition that something untoward had happened was upon him, and in a surprisingly short time, considering the distance, they came to a stop before the door of Beechwood Hall.

Morgan was not on the steps to greet them. There were no lights in the house. Everything was as silent as the grave, and Nick, realizing instantly that something had happened, leaped to the ground and dashed inside.

He knew where the electric switch was located, and he turned it on, flooding the hall with light.

An astounding sight met his gaze.

The footman, Morgan, and the special officer from headquarters were lying upon the floor, unconscious or dead, he did not stop to discover which. But he dashed up the stairs and directly to the room occupied by Nancy Graeme, and here again, having snapped on the switch, an appalling discovery awaited him.

The nurse was lying unconscious upon the couch; and Nancy, with her hands folded across her breast and a smile on her lips, was cold and lifeless upon the bed.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CRIME OF THE MIDDLE AGES.

The doctor had followed Nick up the stairs; Chick and Patsy remained below, for Doctor Stag had directed them to look out for the two men who were there.

The appearance of things was that wholesale murder had been committed during their absence. But how? How had it been accomplished?

The doctor devoted his first attention to Nancy, so white and so beautiful; and as he bent above her, felt of her pulse, listened for a heart-beat, touched her forehead, and otherwise made a cursory examination, he sighed.

"Is she dead?" asked Nick, in a half-whisper.

"I fear so, Nick," replied the doctor. "I am not sure yet. It is terrible! Awful!"

He got down on his knees beside the bed, and he pressed his ear over her heart, and held it there for a long time, and at last he rose to his feet and turned a strained and tired face toward the detective.

"Nick," he said slowly, "here is every appearance of death—and yet—and yet——"

"Well?"

"Something that is deeper and greater than my science tells me that this girl lives. You—I do not know how to say it—you will think it strange in one who is so devoted to science as I am, to make such a statement. There is not one doctor in a thousand who would not pronounce this girl dead; but—— Go away. Leave me alone with her for awhile. I will come to you when I have finished with my examination, Nick."

"The nurse is not dead," said Nick. "She is breathing, very faintly."

"Yes. I know. So are the others down-stairs. They have all been drugged, somehow. Drugged in order that that fiend of a doctor could get to this poor girl without interference. I suspect that the servants in the other part of the house have been drugged in the same way. It is for you to discover how it was done. Leave me now. Leave me with Nancy."

The detective closed the door after him and descended the stairs slowly to the parlor floor—and he reached the bottom just in time to see Patsy reel and fall into Chick's arms.

With a bound he was beside them.

"What is all this, Chick?" he demanded. "What has happened? What has Patsy done? What has he eaten?"

Chick, who was carrying Patsy toward a couch, inclined his head toward a basket of fruit, now more than half-emptied, which stood upon the table in the hall.

"He was eating one of those pears," replied Chick. "I saw him stagger, and I ran toward him. You know the rest."

Patsy was now as unconscious as were the footman and the special officer; but he was breathing, and there seemed to be nothing that they could do save to wait until the effects of the drug had passed off.

As Nick examined the other two men, he discovered, or thought he did, that they were getting better; that the effects of the drug they had taken were gradually wearing off, and, realizing that there was absolutely nothing that could be done for Patsy then, he left Chick in charge of the hall and made his own way to the rear of the house.

There were only two servants there—the cook and a waitress. But they were both in the kitchen and both were unconscious, seated in chairs beside the table, upon which were several of the pears and peaches that had been taken from the basket.

It was early in the season for fruit of this description. It was a most expensive luxury at that time of the year, and Nick readily understood how the servants had eagerly availed themselves of the opportunity to eat it, when it had come to them.

He left the cook and the waitress where he found them, and returned to the hallway; and there he found that Morgan, the footman, had partially recovered, and would soon be able to talk.

Within half an hour from that time the footman was able to tell what he knew, and his story, in brief, was to the effect that about four o'clock that afternoon a messenger had appeared at the house, bearing a large basket of fruit, and with it a note addressed to Morgan—a note which purported to be from the detective. The note was:

"MORGAN: This basket of fruit has just been given to me to send to Miss Graeme. I do not think that she should have any of it. It would not be good for her; but you and the other servants might as well dispose of it.

"NICHOLAS CARTER."

That was all—but it was sufficient.

They had eaten of the fruit—and they had met with the consequences.

The officer presently recovered consciousness, but he could add nothing to the information already supplied by Morgan, nor was there need that he should.

It was only too plain that the fruit had been hypodermically doctored so that all who ate of it should speedily become unconscious. As soon as that happened the way was open for Doctor Codman to enter the house boldly and work his will unmolested.

"Judging from the effect of the drug upon the others," said Nick to his assistant, "it will be about four hours before Patsy recovers from his attack. Make him as comfortable as you can in the meantime."

"How is the young lady?" asked Chick.

"Dead, I fear. I don't know. I am waiting for the doctor to finish his examination."

"She did not eat any of the fruit, according to the terms of that note," said Chick. "It would not have been given to her under the circumstances—when they supposed that you had directed otherwise."

"No; she has been given a different—and, I fear, a much more deadly poison. Great Scott, Chick! To think that even Patsy should be fool enough to tackle that fruit! It will teach him a lesson, I hope."

"There is the doctor," said Chick quietly.

Nick turned and ran up the stairs to where the doctor was awaiting him.

"Come inside the room, Nick," the doctor said. "The nurse has recovered consciousness, but is very weak. I have taken her to another room. Come."

The detective followed him inside, and together they went to the bedside where for a full minute they both stood silently regarding the still form upon the bed.

"Nick," said the doctor, presently, "I am going to repeat something that I said to you before you left this room."

"What is that, doctor?"

"I said that there was not one doctor in a thousand who would not pronounce that girl to be dead, didn't I?"

"Yes."

"I repeat it."

"Well?"

"Nevertheless—*she is not dead!*"

"Thank God for that!"

"I have applied one test which I believe never fails—but I need not go into that. So far as appearances go, she is dead. A coroner would pronounce her dead. Ninety-nine doctors out of a hundred would say that

she died of heart failure. It is so easy to diagnose a case like that. It is a manufactured expression among physicians—so called—to conceal their own ignorances."

"I believe that, all right."

"Nick?"

"Yes."

"You are familiar with Shakespeare, are you not?"

"Quite so."

"You remember Romeo and Juliet?"

"Certainly. Great Scott! doctor——"

"Wait. Listen to me."

"I am all attention."

"This Doctor Codman is evidently a toxicologist of wonderful ability. I have no doubt that it is his hobby; that he has made it a life study."

"Well?"

"You remember that in Shakespeare's play *Juliet* swallowed a drug which produced upon her the effect of suspended animation, and that, although she was consigned to a tomb, she was later restored to consciousness. It has always been supposed among the medical fraternity that this was a mere creation of Shakespeare's; but there have been those who have insisted that the Borgias, and the poisoners of Venice and Rome, knew of such a poison. Certain it is that they manufactured many poisons of which we now know nothing."

"And you think that such a poison as that has been administered to Nancy?" asked Nick.

"Frankly, that is exactly what I think. Listen again."

"Well?"

"You have already told me what your opinion is of the circumstances surrounding us here. You have called it a game for five millions."

"Yes."

"A plot which has found its origin in the brain of the stepfather of the child."

"Yes."

"And you have given it as your opinion that this fiend Codman, for his part of the work, is to receive a few thousand dollars, or, possibly, a million."

"Yes."

"It is my opinion that he is playing for the whole five millions."

"I see what you mean," said the detective quickly.

"Let *me* tell what I mean, Nick. Let me have the satisfaction of having done a little detective work for once in my life."

"Go ahead, Gerard."

"If this fiendish fraud and all of his pals, the entire gang——"

"Including——"

"If the child is supposed to be dead she will be taken to the Graemes mausoleum of the family, at Woodlawn cemetery, and placed in one of the receiving-vaults it [illegible] and this is Doctor Codman's plan."

"Go on, doctor."

"It is my belief that it is his intention to go to that tomb, after a certain lapse of time, to enter it, and to take from it the body of this girl. Doubtless he will time himself so that he will be on hand at the very moment of her awakening, *for in that case, even if he were discovered, he could pose as being her savior.* Don't you see?"

"Yes."

"He could explain his presence there in any one of a dozen ways. He could say that he dreamed that she had been buried alive. No matter what explanation he gave, nobody would believe the real one possible, even if it should occur to anybody to guess it."

"That is true."

"And after that, whatever action we might bring against him, for having poisoned the girl, would fall utterly flat in the face of what he had done to save her from the horrible fate of being buried alive—*and, although I have examined those medicines that I took home with me, I cannot determine what the poisons are.*"

"I understand you, doctor, thoroughly."

"Codman could snap his fingers at us—and he means to do it. He means, by hook or by crook, to marry the girl and to get the whole five millions."

"Wait a minute, doctor; let me think," said Nick; and, after a minute, he added:

"Doctor Stag, will you make out a death-certificate, and make it out so well that there will be no danger of an inquiry by the authorities?"

"What do you mean, Nick?"

"I mean that I wish it to be generally supposed that Nancy is dead. I mean that we will spirit Nancy away to your house, where you can watch her night and day. I mean that we will put a dummy inside the coffin, and send *that* to the mausoleum; and I mean that afterward, if I cannot find Codman in any other way, I will wait for him at the mausoleum. If Nancy is not dead, she will come to life in your house, and if Codman goes to the cemetery after her, he will find Nick Carter there, ready to receive him. That's what I mean."

CHAPTER IX.

WHEN THE DEAD COMES TO LIFE.

It was just a week to a day later when, while Nick Carter was at the breakfast-table, he received a short, peremptory message from Doctor Stag. It read:

"Come to my office at 10:30 this morning. STAG."

During the week that had passed the funeral of Nancy Graeme had taken place, and, as Nick had planned, a [illegible] in place of the body of the girl; Nancy herself was conveyed secretly to the doctor's

house, where he had assumed full charge and entire responsibility in the matter.

And also, during that week, Nick and his assistant had been indefatigable in their efforts to find some trace of Doctor Codman and his sister, and to pick up some clue relative to the fate of Collin Graeme.

But not a clue, nor a trace of one, had been discovered.

It was as if the three persons had disappeared off the face of the earth.

The detective had frankly confessed to himself and to his assistants that never in his experience had he found himself so entirely without resource; so entirely balked; so utterly nonplused in his endeavors.

He had visited Codman's office and searched it thoroughly—finding nothing.

The office and its appointments were as if the doctor had only stepped out to make his usual round of calls, intending to return at any moment. His rent was paid far in advance, and his servant—the negro—remained on duty, stolid and as impenetrable as ever.

Among the effects of the office there was no clue of any kind, either to the doctor or to aid in finding Collin Graeme.

Even the doctor's practise had been turned over, temporarily, to a neighboring physician; and this doctor stated that Codman had gone away on a short vacation, from which he expected shortly to return.

Altogether, it was one of the most puzzling cases that had ever come under the care of the detective.

Ten Ichi, that time when he had been sent by Chick to shadow the doctor, had succeeded in following him only a short distance, for, notwithstading Ten Ichi's abilities in that line, the wily physician had succeeded in throwing him entirely off the track, and Ten Ichi had to admit that he was beaten.

And never had there been the slightest trace obtainable of Collin Graeme, from the moment he had turned away from the cigar-stand at the Hotel Astor in the company of Codman—or, rather, from the moment he had been seen to enter the Stanhope at the door of the hotel.

Only two things had the detective done other than has already been mentioned.

He had cabled to Mr. and Mrs. Graeme, at Venice, a brief account of what had happened, so that they were prepared to arrive in New York within the coming week; and he had called upon Margaret McLeod, at Elm Park Gardens, who was Collin's fiancée, and he had taken Miss McLeod entirely into his confidence.

There had been some encouragement in this, for Margaret had insisted that Collin could not be dead.

"If he were dead I would know it," she had insisted. "There has always been a bond of sympathy between Collin and me," she had told him, "that at times is almost uncanny. It is thought-transference, perhaps, or telepathy. Call it what you will; but I will assure you, Mr. Carter, that at the very time of Collin's disappearance I knew that something had happened to him. Collin is not dead. He will be restored to us, and you will find him."

All this covers the week that had passed since the evening when the poisoned fruit was sent to Beechwood Hall; and now, at last, came the notification from Doctor Stag which, if one were to read between the lines, meant that Nancy had recovered from the trance into which she had been thrown by the drug or drugs administered by Doctor Codman.

For that is what the message meant.

It had been agreed between the doctor and the detective that the latter should keep entirely away from the physician's house until he should be sent for; and now the message had come.

Impatience was not one of Nick Carter's faults; and yet on this particular morning the two hours which had to elapse before he could respond to the doctor's message, seemed interminable.

Promptly at half-past ten, however, he was at the door, and was as promptly admitted by the doctor in person.

"Come in here a moment, Nick," he said, drawing the detective into his private office.

"Has Nancy revived?" asked Nick, as soon as the door was closed behind them.

"Yes."

"In her right mind?"

"Perfectly so."

"Ill? Is she very weak?"

"No; she is, in fact, much stronger than when you last saw her. The poison which Codman administered last, and which induced the trance, has affected her as an antidote against the other poison that she had taken before. I fancy that the first was given to prepare the way for the other."

"That man is a perfect devil," said Nick, with a shrug of his shoulders.

"He is wonderful," admitted Doctor Stag, not without admiration. "I could almost forgive him for what he has done—if only he would open the way for me to attain to his knowledge of toxicology. He is a wonderful man."

"Can I see Nancy?"

"Certainly. That is why I sent for you."

"Let us go to her, then."

"In a moment. I have something to tell you first."

"Then tell it. What is it?"

"During all the time that Nancy has been in that trance she has been perfectly and entirely conscious of everything that has taken place near her. She heard and understood all that we said at her bedside at the time we found her, when we for a time supposed her to be dead. But she could not move a muscle, and you can imagine

she horror of her position while she waited for us to decide if she were alive or dead.

"But all the time she says she did not lose confidence. She had faith in me and she had faith in you."

"It is a remarkable affair, doctor," said the detective.

"Remarkable indeed! Unprecedented. But that is not all, Nick."

"What more?"

"She was, of course, too weak to resist Codman, at the time he made his appearance, after he had drugged the household with the poisoned fruit. She knew that there was no use in struggling and so she resigned herself to her fate.

"When the doctor held out the potion to her, and ordered her to swallow it, she did so, and made no effort to resist him. She says herself that she had gotten beyond the possibility of resistance.

"As she was about to swallow it, Codman assured her that it would not injure her, but that, on the contrary, it would save her life; and as she swallowed it, he whispered to her that he loved her, and that was why he had decided to spare her life.

"But I will let her tell you the rest, in her own way. You will find it interesting."

"I have no doubt of it," replied Nick.

"Come, then," said the doctor. "We will go to her at once. Come."

Nancy was in a large room at the rear of the house, and thither Doctor Stag conducted the detective.

"I will leave you alone together," he said to them, then. "I have two or three important calls to make, which will occupy me about an hour. I will return at the end of that time."

Left alone together, the detective said to her:

"I am sure the ordeal through which you have passed, Nancy,"

"Terrible, indeed!" he replied. "But it is all over, and all right now."

"The doctor tells me that you were perfectly conscious through it all."

"I was—from the very first."

"Tell me about it," said Nick.

"I realized that there was absolutely no way for me to escape. I knew the moment when Codman entered the room that I was entirely in his power. He had something of the look of a fiend as he approached me, but his face softened into a smile as he bent over me."

"What did he do then?"

"He addressed me by my first name—something that he had never presumed to do before; and he said:

"'Nancy, I have sometimes hated to admit that I have fallen in love with you. There are those who think that I am a woman-hater, but I am not. I have only been careful to avoid a passion that I knew, if it came, would be a fatal one. I have come to make them believe that you are dead, for a time, but I am going to save you.'

"'Why?' I asked him.

"'Because I love you,' he told me; and he saw me shrink away from him, for he added: 'I shall not impose myself upon you; but when you have learned all the truth you will have reason to thank me and to love me a little in return.'

"He directed me to straighten out at full length in the bed. Then he took my hands and crossed them over my bosom. Then, directing me to lie very still, he dropped two spoonfuls of a sweet-tasting mixture in my mouth."

She paused for an instant, and Nick waited in silence for her to proceed.

"Almost at the instant of swallowing the mixture," she continued, "I felt the effect of it. My limbs seemed to stiffen. I remember that I tried to move one of them, but I could not do so. My eyes were closed and I could not open them. I tried to put my hands down at my sides, but it was as if they were totally dead. I could not move them at all."

"And yet, all the time, you were entirely conscious," asked the detective.

"Entirely so. Indeed, my sense of hearing seemed even more acute than ordinarily; but I could not turn my head nor move a muscle in my whole body. I imagine that if one were imprisoned in a plaster of Paris cast, the sensation would be much the same as mine was then."

"What happened after that?"

"You must remember that I could not see; I could only hear."

"Yes."

"I think that the doctor watched me in silence for a considerable time, for there was no movement of any kind near me; but at last I heard him call to somebody who was evidently waiting outside the door.

"'You may come in, Jane,' he said. 'It is all right now.'

"Then I heard the rustle of a woman's garments as she crossed the floor toward the bed, and I was somehow conscious of the fact that they were both standing beside me.

"'She swallowed the dose without the least resistance,' I heard the doctor say to his companion. 'She is asleep now; the same, outwardly, as if she were dead, and so perfectly does that drug of mine counterfeit death that I defy even the great Stag to discover that she is alive.'

"'And what do you propose to do now?' the woman asked him.

"'Do? Now? Nothing. Nothing at all,' he replied. 'I shall simply leave matters as they are.'

"And then he went on to explain that after a few hours the people in the house who had been drugged

recover consciousness and would be none the for their experiences.

"'They will find Nancy,' he said, 'and they will believe at she is dead. After that, all things will take the course in such cases. There will be a funeral. will have been called in, and will pronounce death to heart failure. There will be a funeral. Nancy will be placed in the family mausoleum. I have a key to it, Jane. Nancy will recover consciousness the night of the tenth, and at that time I will be there, ready to rescue her; and after that all will be plain sailing for you and me.'"

CHAPTER X.

A MAN WHO FIGHTS WITH POISONS.

"The night of the tenth," said Nick, half to himself. "That is to-night."

"Yes, Mr. Carter."

"The mausoleum has been under espionage ever since the time when your body is supposed to have been placed there," continued the detective. "Part of the time I have been there on watch myself. To night I shall certainly be there in person."

"I have still more to tell you, Mr. Carter."

"What is it, Nancy?" asked Nick.

"While I was lying there, unable to move a muscle, and listening to their talk beside me, I prayed with all my strength that some reference would be made to Collin."

"Yes?" eagerly. "Was there?"

"My prayer was answered."

"Tell me how."

"The woman, whom he addressed as Jane, asked this question:

"'What are you going to do with the brother? You can rest assured that his disappearance will be traced to you, and, if that happens, you won't have much chance to enjoy the millions you expect to win by making this girl your wife. What of the brother?'

"'Don't you worry about the brother,' he replied. 'I will take care of him, and in a way that you little dream of.'

"'How?' she insisted. 'If he is alive, he will inherit half of the money. If you kill him, the murder will come out, and you will have to pay the penalty.'

"'Hush!' he said. 'I see that you do not know your own brother yet, Jane. Collin Graeme is at this moment alive and, moreover, he is physically as well as he ever was. He is even wandering about the streets of the city, but, like all fool detectives don't know it.'

"'What do you mean?' she asked him.

"'I mean what I say,' he retorted. 'I gave him a dose of one of those mixtures which made him forget who he was, and that I stained his face and dyed his hair. I dressed him up to suit my own tastes, and then I turned him loose to subsist in the best way he can. He doesn't know what his name is. His own sister wouldn't know him if she should meet him on the street; and he wouldn't know her, either. I have been to see him every day, and now he has got a job; he is working—earning his living. What do you think of that?'

"He laughed heartily, as if he was vastly amused at the idea, and then he went on again:

"'So, you see, my dear, that no crime can be traced to me; no crime which I cannot overcome with a proper use of the millions I will have at my command; and when the proper time comes—that is, after Nancy is my wife, I will bend my energies to finding her brother. I will succeed, too, so she will still have something more to be grateful to me for.'

"'But if you find him——'

"'When I find him he will be demented. He will not be capable of handling his own property. I will apply to the courts to have his sister and myself appointed as guardians over him, and thus I will have the handling of his estates as well as his sister's. Don't you see how beautifully it works itself out? I stand as the savior of both.'"

"Was there anything more?" asked Nick.

"Yes. One thing more. It is about my stepfather."

"Tell me what it was."

"The woman, Jane, said to him: 'How are you going to settle all this business with your old partner, Angus? Tell me that.'

"The doctor laughed heartily at that; and then he said, snapping his fingers: 'I hold my good Angus in the hollow of my hand, Jane. In the first place, he is not Angus Graeme at all. His name is Angus MacMaster. He is no relation to the Graeme's. In the second place, he is entirely in my power, not only on account of letters he has written to me about this affair, but because of a crime he committed in Aberdeen, for which he is very badly wanted over in Scotland. He won't dare to peep.'

"'But the woman—the mother—is she in it, too?'

"'No,' he replied. 'She is only a vanity-loving fool.' It is terrible to speak so of my own mother, Mr. Carter, but, at least, it gives me the assurance that she has had no hand in this awful affair."

"Indeed it does. We must be thankful for that much."

"And that is all, Mr. Carter. Nothing else happened until you and the doctor came."

"Has the doctor told you that I cabled for your mother to come home?"

"Yes. Her heart will be broken, I fear."

"She will find you alive and well when she arrives, and I have made arrangements so that I will receive a message from quarantine to notify me of her arrival."

The detective left his chair.

"I must go now," he said. "I will not wait for the doctor."

"Why?"

"I am going to begin a new search for your brother. I think, with the clue you have given me, that I can find him with very little difficulty."

"Oh, I hope so! I hope so! And I hope that whatever that drug is that Doctor Codman gave him, that some way will be found to cure him of the effects of it."

"Have no fears about that. If Stag cannot do it, we will make Codman do it himself. Now that we know his hand we are no longer working in the dark."

"That is true."

"And to-night, at the mausoleum, I hope to capture him. If I do, I will get him red-handed, for I shall permit him to enter the mausoleum and open the coffin supposed to contain your dead body, before I strike. Good-by, Miss Graeme."

"It was Nancy a moment ago," she said, half-rising.

"All right," said Nick, smiling down at her. "Good-by, Nancy. Take good care of yourself, and rest assured that we will save your brother, and you, too."

"When shall I see you again?" she asked of him, clinging to the hand he had given her.

"As soon as I have anything to tell you. To-morrow morning, at all events."

He hurried away then, but he encountered the doctor at the door.

"What's your hurry, Nick?" he asked.

"Didn't Nancy tell you about her brother? What Codman said about him?"

"Yes."

"I am going to look for him."

"I am afraid, Nick, that it won't do any good," said the doctor.

"Why not?"

"I didn't take any stock in it. I think that Codman knew that Nancy could hear, and that he was talking for her benefit."

"I don't."

The doctor shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, go ahead," he said. "But first I want to ask you a question."

"All right. What is it?"

"Are you going to keep watch at the mausoleum to-night?"

"I certainly am."

"I want to go there with you."

"You do? Why?"

"Just because I do, that's all."

"It is hardly the place for a physician of your standing, and, besides, I wouldn't wonder at all if the Poison Doctor would put up a pretty stiff fight when he discovers that he is cornered."

"I think he will. That is one of the reasons why I wish to be there."

"Eh? What is that? I didn't know that you were a fighter, doctor."

"Look here, Nick. Has it occurred to you that if he does put up a fight, he won't fight in the same manner or after the same methods that other people would employ?"

"Eh? What do you mean?"

"I mean that he is altogether too crafty a man to go to that place on the errand that will take him there to-night without being prepared for emergencies."

"Well, what of that? We will be prepared, too."

"But not in his way. Nick, don't you understand that he will fight with the weapons he knows best how to use?"

"What weapons are those, doctor?"

"Poisons."

"Wha-a-at!"

"I have said it, Nick."

"Say, doctor, you don't suppose that I am going to do as Nancy did, do you? Just lie back and open my mouth and swallow whatever he chooses to give me? Eh?"

"Hardly that, Nick."

"Then what the devil are you getting at?"

"I hardly know myself; only that I feel assured in my own mind that he will employ some kind of poison in defending himself. He will shoot it at you out of a squirt-gun; he may throw it over you in the form of a powder; he may prick you with a pin that is tipped with it. I am sure that he will resort to some devilish act for your undoing."

The detective shook his head, but he was plainly impressed by what the doctor had said.

"A man who is genius enough to have invented a poison which will perform the miracle we have seen enacted in the case of Nancy, or who can do what you think he has done with her brother Collin, is a man to be feared, Nick."

"He is a man to be on your guard against, certainly."

"He will go to that mausoleum prepared for all emergencies, Nick."

"Very well; then we must make preparation against him."

"Exactly. That is why I wish to go with you. It is a good idea, in a case of that kind, to have a doctor on the spot. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, I do. All right, doctor. I will call for you."

"At what time?"

"About an hour before dark. I want to get to the mausoleum before night falls."

"Suppose he should elect to go there before it is dark?"

"He would find somebody awaiting him. There hasn't been a moment since that dummy was placed in the tomb when there has not been a guard there ready to receive him, if he should call."

"Who is there now?"

"Chick and Ten Ichi. Patsy will go with me to-night, so, with you, there will be five of us. Certainly that ought to be sufficient to overcome one man."

"You don't know that there will be only one. Indeed, I am inclined to think he may have several helpers along with him."

"It is possible. Anyhow, we will be prepared."

"Another question, Nick?"

"Well?"

"Suppose he has caught onto the fact that you are keeping a watch over the mausoleum, and, because of that, he should not show up at all?"

"Why, in that case, we will have to look somewhere else for him, that is all. But I don't think he has any such idea. We have been very careful. I don't think he is onto the game at all."

"You will call for me, then?"

"Yes, an hour before dark."

"Where are you going first, in your search for Collin Graeme, Nick?"

"I am going to the Old Bowery Mission, doctor. They would have spotted a man like Collin Graeme before now, I think; and that is precisely the part of the city where Cadmus would have turned him loose, as he expressed it. That should be a great work, doctor. It is all done silently—like a corpse."

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT CHICK DISCOVERED.

When Nick Carter parted with Doctor Seip he hurried up town to the Old Bowery Mission, for he was not only well known there but the assistance he had given many fine young men, that he knew that a half-starved stranger, in the person of a young and well-looking man, wandering around that part of the city, would have been quickly discovered by the good people who conducted it.

He addressed himself to the young clergyman who was in charge of the place.

"I wish to inquire about a young man who has happened to come under your influence within the last twelve or thirteen days," he said. "Do you recall such a one?"

"Yes," replied the clergyman, smiling. "There are several who might answer to the description you have given."

"This young man about whom I inquire," continued the detective, "is the unfortunate victim of a conspiracy, the particulars of which would seem almost incredible if I should explain them to you; but I can tell you this much:

"He has fallen into the power of an unscrupulous physician, who has succeeded in drugging him into a quasi insensibility. That is, he has made him forget his own identity. Also, I am informed that the doctor has succeeded in disguising his victim in such a manner that it is doubtful if his best friends would recognize him, if he should happen to meet them on the street.

"I have here a photograph of him as he should appear naturally. You see that he is fair, with blue eyes, and is rather a handsome fellow. He is rather undersized, so far as his stature is concerned; but he is compactly built.

"My information concerning him suggests that his skin has been stained to a darker hue, and that his hair has been dyed. More than that I do not know, save that I have been told that he has succeeded in obtaining some sort of employment. Now, my dear sir, do you think you can aid me in the search for him?"

The young clergyman was very thoughtful while he studied the photograph he held in his hand.

"Yes," he said at last, half to himself. "There is a youth whom I have in mind who might be the one. How old is this young man, Mr. Carter?"

"Twenty-one this coming December."

"There is a young man who answers to the name of Collins—I have never heard his given name; my impression is that he refused to give it, and possibly it was because he could not remember it—who was brought here about a week ago by one of our assistants on the streets. He might be the one."

"Collins, you say?" The young man I was in search

Collin Graeme. Where can I find the young man to whom you refer?"

"I don't know. We have lost all trace of him since three days ago."

"Where was he at that time?"

"He had secured employment, through some other influence than ours, with the street-cleaning department; but he is not there now."

"You are positive about that, I suppose?"

"Yes; because we have searched for him."

"You do not know where he went from there?"

"We have no idea whatever."

"Who was his immediate boss? Do you know that?"

"A man name Pat Brennan."

"Where can I find *him?*"

The clergyman referred to a book upon his desk, and replied:

"He has charge of the gang now working in Center Street. He makes his headquarters at the corner of Pearl. I think you will find him there now."

The detective thanked his informant and hurried away; nor did he experience any difficulty in finding Brennan.

"Brennan," he said, "I am Nick Carter. I——"

"The divil ye are! Sure, it's glad to know ye I am. What can I be after doin' f'r ye, Mr. Carter?" the man interrupted him.

"You had, until three or four days ago, a young man working for you by the name of Collins. I want to find that young man."

"We know all our men only by numbers," replied Brennan, wrinkling his brows. "Mebby, though, I can help ye. What kind of a looking chap is he?"

"Short, thick-set, handsome of feature, twenty years old, skin stained to a dark-brown, blue eyes, hair dyed black; a gentleman by birth and training; has been made dotty by drugs until he had forgotten who he was, and——"

"Hold on! Hold on, there! I know him. Wait." Then he raised his voice and added: "Here, Finnigan! You! Come here! What became of six-thirty-nine? Where is he?"

"I fired him, Brennan. He was no good. Couldn't work. Didn't know how, or wouldn't."

"Where did he go? Do ye know that?"

"Was of the boys saw him larkin' f'r a Punch and Judy show on the Coney Island Bowery, only yesterday. He told me about it. Why? What's the matter? Anything wrong?"

"This gentleman wants to find him, that's all," replied Brennan.

"Wait, Finnigan," said the detective, as the assistant foreman was turning away. "Did you, while he was here, ever see him spoken to by any person outside your gang?"

"Yes, sir; twice. A chap with a pointed black beard and beady eyes. He looked as if he might be a doctor —'r an undertaker."

"Thank you. That is all. Thank you also, Brennan."

The detective hurried to a telephone and ordered his automobile brought to him; and half an hour later he was crossing Brooklyn Bridge. Within an hour from that time he was at Coney Island.

Any person who is familiar with Coney Island Bowery knows what a maze, what a labyrinth it is. To search for a person there is like looking for the proverbial needle in the stack of hay; nor was this the best hour in the day to search for one who was "barking" for a show down there. The crowd had not yet arrived; there was no need, until later in the day, for the barkers.

Nick traversed the length of that remarkable thoroughfare twice and stopped at the only "Punch and Judy" shows he found there; but he obtained not the slightest information at any of them; there were three, and at all of them he was assured that their barkers had been in their employ all the season.

The detective returned to his starting-place, determined that on the next trip he would thoroughly canvass every place throughout the entire length of the planked walk, and he was on the point of starting when he stopped suddenly and drew quickly out of sight from one person he had seen.

"Jane Gore!" he said to himself. "Codman's sister. Good! If I watch her, she will take me to Collin Graeme;" and he stepped behind a screen, where he rapidly and dexterously adjusted an iron-gray wig and a bunch of gray whiskers to his chin. Then he stepped outside again, and calmly pursued Jane Gore, who was now walking rapidly down the narrow street.

Presently she slowed down, then stopped, and seemed to be studying her surroundings with some care, as if she were not quite certain where she was to go.

But the question she would have asked was answered for her in an unexpected manner, for at that instant, out of the very doorway before which she was standing,

a blue-eyed but swarthy-skinned young man, poorly dressed and whose clothing hung loosely upon an emaciated physique, appeared before her, and she stepped forward hastily and spoke to him.

"Great Scott!" thought the detective. "Who would have supposed that Codman could have wrought such a change as that! No wonder that he felt no fear that Collin would be recognized."

The two appeared to be conversing earnestly together, and Nick was for a moment in doubt as to the best course to pursue.

His impulse was to arrest them both, then and there; but after a moment he thought better of it.

"If I should arrest Jane Gore now, I might frighten the doctor away from his intended visit to the mausoleum to-night. It is possible that he is even somewhere near at this moment; but, even if he is not, he would be frightened if his sister did not return to him. It is plain that she has come here at his bidding. I think——"

He paused suddenly.

A man, who bore not the least resemblance to Doctor Codman, had approached the pair and was now talking with them.

"By jove!" thought Nick. "If that is Codman, he's a crackajack! As keen as I am at penetrating disguises, he could have passed me on the street anywhere."

Whatever the nature of the business might have been that the two had with Collin Graeme, it was quickly transacted, for, after five minutes' earnest talk, they turned away, and as they did so Nick saw the man press a bill into Graeme's hand.

"I wish that Chick, or one of the boys were here with me now," murmured the detective, as he watched them go. "I would like to shadow those two. But my duty is here now. I have found Collin Graeme; I must not lose sight of him again."

He watched the two until they had disappeared, and then he stepped forward quickly and placed one hand lightly upon the shoulder of young Graeme.

The young man wheeled upon him like lightning, and, before Nick realized what he was doing, he struck out so savagely that the detective barely escaped receiving a severe blow squarely in the face. But he managed to parry it, and at the same instant he caught Graeme by both wrists and held him as if he were in a vise.

The young man continued to struggle; and, as he did so, three men ran out from the doorway through which he had appeared, and they would have attacked the detective then and there had he not called out to them:

"I am an officer. If you attempt to interfere with me, I'll make it hot for the whole outfit."

Then he devoted his entire attention to Graeme, who had become suddenly quiet.

"Collin Graeme," said Nick, in a low, earnest tone, "don't you know your own name? Do you not know who you are, Collin Graeme?"

The name seemed to touch a chord of memory; he blinked at Nick, and smiled wanly.

"Your sister Nancy is waiting for you," continued Nick. "Nancy. Your sister. Collin Graeme's sister. You are Collin Graeme, and Nannie——"

The young man shivered in the detective's grasp, and Nick could hear him murmur to himself:

"Nannie! Nannie! Sister! Collin Graeme! Collin Graeme's sister Nannie!" and then suddenly he demanded: "Who are you? What do you know about Collin Graeme—and Nannie? Nannie is dead, I tell you."

"No, Collin," said Nick kindly. "Nannie is alive. She is waiting for you. I am going to take you to her. She wants you. She needs you. Don't you remember that she was very ill, and that you came from college—from Hamilton College, to see her? Nannie—your sister Nannie, is alive and well, and she is waiting for you."

"That man said she was dead. I don't know who he is, only that I have seen him somewhere. He has been good to me. He said that Nannie died, and that I would be arrested if I was not careful. That is why I struck at you. He said that somebody might come after me, but that I would be put in prison if I allowed myself to be taken. Is that true?"

"No. It is a lie, Collin. Nannie sent me to get you, and to take you to her. Nannie would not put you in prison, would she?"

"No. No. Nannie wouldn't do that. No."

"Then, will you go with me to find her? Now? I have an automobile here. We will go in that to find Nannie. Will you go with me?"

"Yes," he said. "I will go with you. Yes. I will go to find Nannie, for I believe you. You see, there is something the matter with my head. I cannot remember things. I had forgotten my name until you re-

minded me of it. But I know it now. Yes; I will go with you to find Nannie."

"Come, then," said Nick. "We will go at once;" and he led him unresistingly away.

CHAPTER XII.

THE NIGHT OF THE TENTH.—A FIGHT WITH A FIEND.

The mausoleum erected by the grandfather of Collin and Nancy Graeme is an imposing edifice of its kind. It cost a fortune to build it, and if a tomb can be said to be palatial in its appointments, this one was and is.

Moreover, it stands very much by itself, for at the time it was built a large section of the cemetery was purchased for the site, in order that it might stand alone—in order that the other silent inhabitants of the locality might not intrude upon it.

There is a grove of old growth trees half-surrounding it, and there is a high and dense hedge there also.

The approach to the mausoleum is along a pathway through this hedge; a pathway which leads to a crescent shaped portico supported by Corinthian pillars. Beyond, in the center, is the massive door of wrought-iron bars, and inside the mausoleum resembles, more than anything else, a superbly appointed chapel.

It was to the grove behind the mausoleum, deep among the trees, that Nick Carter conducted Doctor Stag, just before dark, on the evening of the tenth of June.

Ten Ichi was with them; Chick and Patsy were already there.

"We will be secure from observation here," said the detective, as he led them among the trees. "We can see without being seen, for to-night will be almost as bright as day, with the moonlight."

"What time do you figure it out that Codman will show up?" asked the doctor.

"At almost any moment after the cemetery closes for the night. He would not make any effort to visit this place before that; but after it, if he has found a secret way into the cemetery—as he undoubtedly has done—he could [illegible] safely [illegible]."

"It certainly is sufficiently isolated," said the physician.

"It could not be better for his purposes. And now, if you please, we will all remain absolutely still. No talking whatever."

"I [illegible] you talking [illegible] the superintendant back at the gate. Is he wise to what is going on?"

"Certainly. No impediment will be put in the way of Codman's entrance to the cemetery, even if he should be seen. I have arranged for that."

"You are a long-headed chap, Nick."

"I have to be so in my business, doctor. Now, quiet, if you please."

From that time on not a word was spoken between the five men who waited there for the appearance of Doctor Codman.

The twilight deepened into darkness, and for an hour it was intensely dark; but after that the glow of the moon, not yet risen, but near the horizon, dispelled some of the gloom.

It was half-past ten o'clock precisely when Nick, who had just glanced at his watch, saw the figure of a man suddenly appear in the pathway where it cut through the hedge in front of the mausoleum.

For a full minute the man stood there silently, as if he were reconnoitering; and then moved slowly and silently forward toward the marble building.

As he did so, four other forms came out of the shadows behind the hedge and crept along silently after him, and in this manner they glided up the path and passed beyond the Corinthian columns of the mausoleum.

"It will be five against five," said Nick, in a whisper, to his companions. "Come!"

He crept forward silently, and they followed him; and, fortunately, the shadows cast by the trees behind them protected them until they were close beside the building.

Then it was that Nick held up his hand as a signal for the others to wait while he crept forward alone; and in a moment he had secured a position where he could see all that was taking place beyond those marble columns.

Codman had lighted a lantern, which was provided with a powerful reflector, and, in the glare of it, with his pointed beard and his sinister face, he looked the very demon he had already proved himself to be. His four companions were grouped around him, and he was evidently giving them their final instructions, for they were all talking earnestly together.

After a moment Codman produced a key, and with it quickly unfastened the heavy grated door of the mausoleum; in another moment all five of them had passed inside.

Nick signaled to his companions, and they all moved forward again; and presently they raised themselves erect just outside the door and in a position from whence they could plainly see all that was taking place inside the tomb.

The casket in which the body of Nancy was supposed to be encased was resting upon a sort of altar of marble, in the very center of the mausoleum, and Codman was already busily engaged in removing the screws from the lid, while the others stood around, silently observing him.

Nick and his friends crept closer still to the door.

They stood ready, when the proper moment should arrive, to dash inside—and that moment was now near at hand.

Patsy had received instructions from his chief to hang back behind the others when the attack should be made, and to pull the door shut behind him, for it was provided with a spring-lock, and, once closed, none of the grave-robbers could escape—for Nick had provided himself with an extra key.

Every nerve was at a tension; every muscle was strained and ready for the coming combat, as they awaited the signal for the attack.

Presently they heard Codman utter an exclamation of pleasure as he removed the last screw.

"There!" he said.

Nick saw him bend forward to lift the lid from its place, and he motioned to his companions to be ready.

Then the lid was lifted, and for one instant there was utter silence.

And then——

The coffin-lid crashed to the floor of the mausoleum; a volley of curses from Codman exploded upon the air.

He started back with staring eyes, evidently unable, for a moment, to believe the evidence of his own senses.

In the meantime, Nick and his followers had passed silently inside the building, and Patsy pulled the door shut after them.

It was the click of the lock as it snapped into place that aroused Codman and his men, and the former turned with a snarl of rage just at the instant when Nick Carter leaped forward and grappled with him; just at the instant when Doctor Stag, Chick, Ten-Ichi, and Patsy also started forward, each having selected his adversary.

Nick had reached a point within ten feet of Codman before the attack was made, and one leap brought him within reach of the man so that he seized him around the body in a manner that is known to wrestlers as the "back hold."

It had never once occurred to Nick Carter that he might encounter his match in strength and science in Doctor Codman. The tall, slight figure of the Poison Doctor did not suggest that he possessed the extraordinary strength that was his.

But when Nick grappled with him and sought to bend his back and throw him to the marble floor, it was as if he had seized upon a rod of steel; the doctor's back would not bend.

Indeed, for the first half-minute it seemed to Nick that his own back must give way under the awful pressure which Codman put upon it; and they stood there, two giants of strength, so evenly matched that neither appeared to obtain the slightest advantage over the other.

There is an old bull about what would happen if an irresistible force should come in contact with an impassable barrier, and a person, watching this contest between Nick Carter and the fiend doctor, might have been forcibly reminded of it.

They swayed and strained against each other, neither appearing to obtain the least advantage. Their faces were close together; their chins rested upon each other's shoulders; their hands were locked behind each other's backs.

Nick, however, had one advantage. He had the under hold, and that gave him a purchase which the doctor could not obtain.

Nick saw that he could not hope to bend Codman's back, and so he resorted to another means of overcoming his enemy.

He lifted him bodily from his feet and sought to throw him in that manner; but every time he tried it, Codman landed flatly on his feet again, and the struggle was renewed.

The detective presently came to the conclusion that he could not hope to overcome the doctor by his present methods, and he decided to resort to a stratagem. There was a risk in attempting it, for it might fail, and in that case the doctor would have a decided advantage.

Suddenly he released his hold around the doctor's back, and, with a lightninglike motion, he delivered a short-arm blow with the second knuckle of his middle finger.

It landed where he had intended it should—that is, directly under the physician's ear; and the terrific force of it seemed instantly to paralyze Codman's entire body.

His arms dropped from the detective's back; his knees partly gave way beneath him; and in that instant Nick seized him again, raised him from the floor bodily, and dashed him down with terrible force upon and against the marble floor, where he remained a quivering mass of inanimate flesh.

And then Nick turned to the others; and just in time to see that Doctor Stag had been overcome, and that his adversary was in the act of raising a knife with which to stab him.

But a blow from Nick Carter's fist put the fellow out before the weapon could fall, and Nick saw then that each of his assistants were engaged in quietly handcuffing their fallen foes.

The fight was over. Codman and his confederates were captured, and a messenger sent hastily to the superintendent's office quickly brought a patrol-wagon, which took the prisoners away.

A word more, and the story is told.

Jane Gore escaped, and not a trace of her could be found, then or afterward.

Collin Graeme, after three months of unremitting care at the hands of Doctor Stag, entirely recovered from the effects of the poison that had been administered, and ultimately he returned to finish his course at college.

Nancy also recovered entirely from the effects of her harrowing experiences, and was reunited with her mother, in heart as well as in fact.

The stepfather killed himself when he found that exposure was at hand, and, although Mrs. Graeme never entirely overcame the memory of all that had happened through her vanity, she devoted herself henceforth to her children.

THE END.

The next number, 514, will contain "Codman, the Poisoner; or, Nick Carter's Strangest Experience."

ABOUT THE EARLY NUMBERS OF THE TIP TOP WEEKLY

WE receive hundreds of letters every week from readers asking if we can supply the early numbers of Tip Top containing Frank's adventures. In each [illegible] to reply that [illegible] to [illegible] of print. We would like to call the attention of our readers to the fact that the Frank Merriwell Stories now being published in book form in the Medal Library are inclusive of these early numbers. The first book to appear was No. 160 entitled "Frank Merriwell's Schooldays." We give herewith a complete list of all stories that have been published in book form up to the time of writing. We will be glad to send a fine colored catalogue of the Medal Library [illegible] upon receipt of a [illegible]

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